

THE CREATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF *THE DIGGER*

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THE CREATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF *THE DIGGER*

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ABSTRACT

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SUPERVISING PROFESSOR: JOHN FLEMING

This thesis is composed of two segments: creative and academic. The creative core of the thesis is a two act play titled *The Digger*, which is supported by an academic meditation on the creation and development of the text. The academic segment will include three chapters wherein I detail the process of writing the play from conception to post-production. Chapter four will be the text of the play followed by a conclusion and an appendix of production photos and other production-related documents.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION TO THE WORK

To aide the reader's understanding of this thesis, I provide here a basic synopsis of the play. The play takes place in a small Hill Country town outside of San Antonio in contemporary times. Chris is an amateur archeologist who finds a conquistador helmet while digging for arrowheads on someone else's land. In his attempt to handle this discovery he destroys his family and the life of an innocent man.

Act One Synopsis

Chris's girlfriend, Magdalena, is a Mexican citizen whose student visa is close to expiring. She is eight months pregnant and preparing to have her first child. Magdalena worries about her mother who has threatened to cross the border in order to be with her. Chris "digs" many nights a week and has increasingly distanced himself from Magdalena. After finding the conquistador helmet, Chris and Magdalena hope that the helmet can be sold, thus offering a promise of financial gain and security. Chris goes to see his old professor (Fred) in San Antonio who convinces Chris to give the helmet to the university in exchange for a degree and a career path.

Chris has been digging illegally on the ranch of a delusional rancher, Wayne. Wayne's ranch is no longer operational but he still hires migrant workers to perform chores around the place so that he can keep the feeling alive. Quichimin is the name of

the man that currently works for Wayne, but Wayne calls him “Pancho” as he calls all Mexicans “Pancho.” Wayne believes that the holes being dug on his land are the product of giant armadillos, and he gives Quichimin the task of filling them back in. As Quichimin fills in one of the holes, he discovers that he is standing in an old Indian camp. A song begins emerging from the earth. Quichimin begins digging into the hole and discovers a six-inch Clovis knife blade. A hawk cries, a feather falls, and Act One closes as Quichimin stands holding the knife and the feather.

Act Two Synopsis

Chris and Fred arrive at Wayne’s ranch in the hopes of convincing him to allow them to “survey” the land for potential archaeological sites. Wayne hesitates at first, but gives in when he learns that the “university boys” might be able to help him track down the armadillos with their satellite maps. Chris and Fred are inspecting the hole when Quichimin appears, achieves a hold on Fred, and demands that Chris bring the helmet back to the hole. Chris has no other choice but to go and fetch the helmet. When he arrives home he finds Magdalena in an emotional mess. She is deeply worried about her mother, she is losing faith in Chris, and she is waiting for her baby to come. She tries to talk with Chris but he is in too much of a hurry to talk about anything, so once he procures the helmet he leaves her. Upon returning to the hole, Chris discovers that Wayne is also there, rifle in hand, demanding to know what has transpired. Ultimately, Chris is forced to give the helmet over to Quichimin, who begins to obsessively bury the helmet. Wayne runs Chris and Fred away and demands that Quichimin get out of the hole. Quichimin refuses. Chris and Fred arrive back at Wayne’s house and discuss what

happened. Wayne shoots Quichimin and begins to bury him in the hole. Fred insinuates to Chris that they did not hear the shot, and that they were never even there on the ranch.

Magdalena tries to call her mother again and again but she will not answer, and overcome she slams her phone again and again until it shatters. Magdalena's brother, César arrives, bearing the news that their mother has been murdered while trying to cross the border. He tells her that he had sent their mother the money to get smuggled across and that somewhere in Nuevo Laredo she was robbed and killed. He is now going to pick up her body and will be taking her back to their home town in the interior of Mexico. Magdalena decides to go with her brother, as he can not convince her to stay, and she leaves a note for Chris. Chris returns home to find Magdalena has left for Mexico. Wayne has a new migrant worker named Emiliano perform the same tasks that Quichimin used to do, and he also calls him "Pancho."

In addition to the plot discussed above, there is the character of Marta, who never really speaks but who is present throughout a majority of the play. In some interpretations, this is her story. Marta's role will be clarified in later chapters and in the play text itself, so let it suffice for now to say that she serves as stage-hand, surrogate mother to Magdalena, and native spirit to Quichimin. If one considers the performance of this play to be a ceremony, Marta may then be thought of as its guide.

The function of this thesis is to serve as a sort of production book reflecting my process as a writer. I have tried to discuss each of the elements that have in some way shaped or formed what *The Digger* has ultimately become. One of the most fascinating aspects of this process has been observing the story evolve. Chuck Ney, who directed the inaugural production, and who has been my closest advocate for telling the story, has on

numerous occasions talked about “what the story wants to be.” It may sound somewhat ethereal to endow a story with a will to live, and I suppose on the one hand it is. But on the other, it is true to say that this story has emerged from a certain place and time, like a song that comes to the bard, seemingly out of the creative ether.

CHAPTER TWO

IMPULSES AND IDEA

Impulses

As an undergraduate student, I studied religion for two years before deciding to major in theatre studies. One of the catalysts for that decision was my fascination with the ritual potential of theatrical production. The mystery and morality of the drama, and the physical and visceral components of performance drew me to the secular ceremony that theatre can be. While I do not follow the doctrine of any one religion, I do find that ceremony is important for a community, in the way that sitting around the dinner table is important for a family.

One of my convictions is that storytelling is an art form that must not be lost to technology. There is something essentially *human* about storytelling, and humanity should be the guiding element in both the content and form of drama. The theatre must provide for the spectator an experience that rivals that of cinema and television, and it must create something that those mediums are unable to do. In my mind that experience is one of ceremony. One of Aristotle's comments on tragedy is that it produces catharsis in the spectator. Though the meaning of this is still debated today, the essence of Aristotle's observation is that catharsis is the result of the spectator's emotional journey

vis-à-vis the story. What catharsis means for each individual spectator is a product of his or her own personal process that occurs during and after the performance.

While no playwright or director can guarantee a common cathartic result, there are certain dramatic and physical elements that help guide the spectator on a journey into the drama, just as the hot stones, cold water, and rhythmic singing help guide the sweat lodge participant through that ceremony. For example, the constant creation and usurpation of expectations is a common element that keeps spectators invested in the story, as well as a physical palette of gesture, light and sound that serve to enrich the visceral experience. As I begin writing a play, I try to balance out in my mind the intellectual and physical elements that will eventually become the body of the drama. I am concerned with both the ceremonial level of the physical production and the humanism that must live in and through the story.

As a playwright, a citizen, and a human being, I have been compelled to look at the human story evolving around me. What I have seen in south-central Texas is a story that is both ancient and modern, and within this story is an essential conflict regarding how we treat the land and how we treat each other. In the United States we are caught in a cultural paradox: we are trying to move forward and preserve the past at the same time. The problem is that a non-romantic view of the past taints the procedures that we are using to push forward with progress. For example, Texas was originally “settled” by migratory indigenous people who were later colonized by Europeans. The descendents of the Europeans later built walls on top of the land and prevented migration from occurring. Today, migration occurs across the Texas border, much to the chagrin of the nationalists who believe that Mexicans crossing the border are breaking laws. In the event

that one of those Mexicans has indigenous roots, the discourse must be shifted from a purely contemporary national security problem to a post-colonial problem, which most people do not want to discuss.

Idea

One of the traits of the modern Anglo-American is that his roots are most often lost in the myriad grafting projects of his ancestors. He is no longer an oak or a sycamore or a pecan but some hybrid tree whose origin exists up the river bank of time and beyond his perception, while many of the minority groups of America like the Native, the Hispanic and the African have maintained some claim to their identity: their roots held them together as the floods of dominant culture swept down the valleys of this nation. When an outsider looks to Texas today, it is the cowboy who is typically seen. But the cowboys are outnumbered by the *campesinos* and *gauchos*, who were once the original working men of this region.

One fascinating thing about south-central Texas is the richness and diversity of the people who have called it home. It is one of the longest continually habited places in North America, a place where the ancestors of those who would later become the Aztecs and Maya once stopped to drink from the springs. It is the site of now mythological battles like that of the Alamo Mission and the Texas Rangers' fight against the Comanche. In preparation for this play I sought artistic inspiration through personifying the land itself. I imagined that the land follows the narrative of the people who live on it. To the land, the mythologies of the Tonkawa are as valid as the views of Mexican Catholics, as valid as those of contemporary protestants. As times change, the land

becomes a multi-cultural collage of the people who have dwelt upon it, and even though the indigenous people are no longer here, the land remembers that they once were, and the land remembers how they left. The rivers here are reminders of another moment in time. They are named Brazos, Pedernales, Blanco, Frio, Guadalupe, Nueces, Colorado.

In Texas, our border with Mexico is a river. A river that is always changing its path through the sandy plains, teasing cartographers. In El Paso they have poured concrete banks in order to define the river once and for all, so as not to have to deal with the existential crisis of shifting dirt and water. In some places the river has run completely dry, sucked out by farmers and factories from both the north and the south. What once was El Rio Grande is now sometimes simply an *arroyo*. I look around and see so many people trying to fix their borders, living in gated communities, using concrete to convince the river not to move. I also see many people trying to fix their own personal borders, living in a trend, a political party, a church, a nationality, a race. Despite our best efforts, it seems that Nature is driving us towards change, towards migration, towards a movement of the self that transubstantiates us into each other.

Three things happened to me ten years ago, when I was sixteen, that began to shape my understanding of this land and its people. The first was that I attended a Native American Church peyote ceremony on New Year's Eve that was held on a ranch outside of San Antonio. I heard for the first times the honest songs of an Indian, not the Hollywood version or the Puta Maya pow-wow disc, but a song that came from the vibrations inside of a person's body. They came out into the darkness of night and mingled with the flames of the intently tended fire, twisted up with the smoke and flew away into the December air. I heard stories about hardships, about being clandestine and

about gratitude for the simple things. There was a man there from Chiapas who spoke about being both a Mexican and an Indian, and how the struggles of the Mexican people are ultimately intertwined with the struggles of the indigenous people. Although I was welcomed to their ceremony out of the heart of hospitality, I could also feel that I was not welcome by the ethos of history.

The second event happened during a camping trip that I took with friends to Big Bend National Park, which borders Mexico. We paid three dollars to be rowed in old wooden boats across the Rio Grande to the small town of Boquillas to enjoy a couple of mescals, the ride back was free. The following day we freely waded across the hip-high waters of the muddy river and made a picnic on a cliff overlooking America. Today those travel options are no longer available. The border is closed.

The third event is that my father divorced his third wife and then went on a two-year personal quest. He is an old cowboy type with a huge heart that somehow has only a small space in it for himself. He seems haunted by his past and can not forgive himself for the tough times. He used to live beside the Blanco River when I was young; he taught me to fish and to hunt, how to clean the catfish and hang the deer. He put *Black Elk Speaks* in my Christmas stocking when I was twelve. The following winter when I shot my first deer, I said a prayer of gratitude over his body.

I mention these three incidents that happened ten years ago to contextualize the emotional and intellectual climate of *The Digger*. The forgotten Indian, the clandestine Mexican, the guilty cowboy: these are spirits that inhabit this land. In many ways they are the spirits that inhabit America.

After living in Europe and Oregon for six years I returned home to Texas. My young revolutionary impulses had been replaced by a belief in the slow and sustainable development of change. I started to slow down and look at the nuances of life rather than focus on the sound-bite solutions peddled by politicians of any stripe. I began to have more compassion for all the shades of humanity rather than criticize those who I had previously looked upon as blind capitalists, war-mongers and bigots.

When I returned home to Texas I felt ready to embrace my native culture, to see what it felt like to wear boots every day, to work on fences and wake up daily before dawn. None of those things turned out to be terribly comforting. But while doing manual labor in my home town I was put in charge of hiring some migrant workers to help with various projects. The migrants in our town wait at the Catholic church for day labor, and it is a daily humbling sight to pass. I stopped in on several occasions to pick up guys for a day or two worth of work. During lunch I would ask them about where they were from and how long they have been in the States. Those questions started getting more in depth, until I was asking them about how they cross the border and whether or not they had indigenous roots. They were more than happy to tell me their stories, and for all I know I may have been the first gringo to ever ask them about *their* home.

What I learned is that many of the migrants in my town were indigenous people from Mexico who spoke indigenous languages. I learned that they either pay a “coyote” to lead them through the desert or they have learned the way before and now go it alone. Either way it can take four days of walking. I learned that many of the migrant workers in this nation are among the poorest people in Latin America, and that many of them have

indigenous roots. I have worked with teenagers and grandfathers, and their stories are most often the same.

I previously mentioned that south-central Texas is one of the longest continually habited places in North America. As a result, there exists today an extensive network of burnt-rock middens (ancient oven-pits constructed by regional Native Americans) and campsites along all of the flowing waterways in the region. As a child I grew up looking for arrowheads in the woods and as an adult learned that there are people who dig up these old sites as a pastime. Some dig legally and others illegally. It is not illegal to dig an archaeological site as long as it is not a burial site or listed in the register of historic places. What most often makes digging illegal is that people trespass on the land where the sites are. Many ranchers in the region have experienced first hand the massive holes that can result.

Despite the rich physical history of indigenous people in the region, there is hardly a trace of the actual indigenous culture in the area. In San Antonio, the descendents of the Mission Indians (those Indians who were brought into Spanish missions during the colonial era) have an active group that works to promote and recognize their history. But they are the exception. Practically all of the indigenous people that lived in the region in the frontier days were eventually transported to reservations in Oklahoma. Besides being a tragic history, this situation has emptied the cultural richness that could have been a part of this region today. However, the fact that many of the migrant Mexican nationals who come to work (and some to immigrate) in the region are indigenous people themselves changes the way that one might look at the

political and cultural landscapes that concern us today. While many people claim a right to this land based on nationality, others might have a claim to it based on ethnicity.

What does all this have to do with theatre? These ideas and observations slowly accumulated into a dream-like collage: the migrant worker who is also an Indian; the old stubborn Cowboy; the young gringo digging into the past; a child of two cultures; the restrictions of the border and its loopholes; the land mixing up the stories and beliefs of different people; the notion of home. These characters, symbols, motifs and themes made their way into both the form and content of *The Digger*.

CHAPTER THREE

SCRIPT DEVELOPMENT

First Draft

I should first remind the reader that the play was originally titled *Mute Point*. For consistency I will refer to the play as *The Digger* even when I am discussing phases of the text when it was called by another name. The first draft of *The Digger* was completed in December 2007 as the product of a playwriting course. The first reading took place with three other playwriting students and our professor John Hood. Reaction to the core of the story was good, yet we all concurred that work still needed to be done in regards to dramatic structure and character development. One issue that John Hood raised in the first meeting pertains to Magdalena's monologue at the end of Act One, where she reads a children's story out loud. John felt that the story was too long and that it wasn't crucial to the plot of the character. While I agreed with the critique, I believed there was a way to make it work and in later revisions I would alter the story.

Around the same time that I was completing the first draft, I heard the news from our department chair that there would be an organized and rehearsed staged reading of *The Digger* sometime during the spring semester. Chuck Ney would facilitate the reading, and Texas State alumnae would be coming down from New York to participate in the process. I was eager to get the play as far along as possible before the reading.

In the first draft I had not yet imagined some of the elements that would later become essential to the story. Between the first draft and the staged reading I introduced the characters of Marta and César, both of whom were created to engage Magdalena more. In the first draft of the play, Magdalena only spoke with Chris, an element that was structurally weak given her importance in the story. Introducing Marta not only increased the mythos that envelops the play, but also provided a surrogate and shadow mother figure who could accompany the visual and emotional composition of Magdalena's loneliness. César's introduction to the play provided a means for Magdalena's departure from Chris, as well as an outlet for her to speak her mind in a way that she was unable to do with Chris.

One element that was part of the first draft that did not survive into the present one regards an armadillo. I had originally imagined that the silhouette of an armadillo would appear on the stage at different points of the play. My intention was to create a symbolic and fictional mythology based around a type of armadillo god that watched over the burnt-rock midden where Chris digs. When director Chuck Ney and I began discussing the script before going into production, we both agreed that the armadillo was a motivating idea for me as a playwright but that it ultimately did not belong on the stage. Dr. Ney confessed that despite my artistic and mythological intentions, most people would "read" the armadillo as a piece of road kill, not as an ancient spiritual force. We got a good laugh out of it all and said goodbye to our armored friend.

Staged Reading

The staged reading was spearheaded by Texas State alumnae who are among the founding members of the Working Man Clothes company based in New York City, and their company is dedicated to producing new work. As such we had an inspired and talented group assembled. The alumnae consisted of two directors and two actors. *The Digger* was assigned one of the directors (Jared Culverhouse) and both of the actors (Michael Mason and Cole Wimpee). I met with Jared the day before the first rehearsal and we discussed the basic process of the staged reading rehearsal, his process as a director and my process as a playwright. Chuck Ney selected the cast and after two nights of rehearsals the reading took place in front of an audience of about sixty people.

The staged reading allowed me to sit back and listen to the play. I listened to the story itself, to the rhythm of the language and the dynamics between characters. The staged reading marked the beginning of a conflict that exists for any writer who is still in the process of developing a script. As I listened to the words and watched the actors speak them, I was aware that a liminal space exists between the performance text and the literal text: good actors can make poor dialogue convincing and poor actors can make good dialogue sound contrived. One will also find that certain pieces of the text that are beautiful to the ear do not ultimately belong in the greater structure of the play, while other sections that may sound “simple” are necessary for the exposition, character development or action. Thus the stage reading marked the beginning of my journey as a playwright vis-à-vis the living text.

A staged reading provides the playwright with an excellent forum to discuss a new text with actors, designers, directors and spectators. In order to facilitate this

conversation, I created an audience questionnaire that was printed on the back side of the program and we invited the spectators to respond. The questions pertained to three different concerns that had been voiced by members of our department and company.

The first question was about the title of the play. I originally chose '*Mute Point*' to act as a loose reference to the quiet arrowheads buried in the ground, to the rarely heard sentiment that many migrant workers in the United States have indigenous roots, and to the lack of definitive resolution at the end of the play. This title had met with some resistance for its ambiguous resemblance to the idiom "moot point" and for the staged reading we included a subtitle, *Why Mice Still Live in Holes*, that was derived from Cole Wimpee's suggestion during one of the rehearsals. The question asked was "Do you have a preference for the title (*Mute Point*) or the subtitle (*Why Mice Still Live in Holes*), or do you like them both together?" Responders chose equally between the three options, leading me to believe that none of the titles were overwhelmingly convincing. One responder went outside the parameters and said "I don't feel either get to the root of the story." Some months later I would finally agree and settled on *The Digger*.

The second question was the most ambiguous and offered the responder an opportunity to give their personal feedback. The question was "What are your general likes and dislikes about the play? Was there anything that was "unclear" or that didn't make 'sense.'" Most responders chose to provide me with their "likes" which included: the subject matter, the post-colonial theme, the blending of English and Spanish, diversity of characters, and mythological elements. The "dislikes" were mixed in with comments about what was "unclear": Marta's function, the quick resolution of the conflict, and the ambiguity of Pancho's character. The most common response regarding 'dislikes' was a

sentiment that Chris and Magdalena's relationship needed more development and less exposition, an issue that I fully agreed with and would work on continually through the script development process.

The third and final question pertained to the introduction of Magdalena's brother, César, and the revelation of their mother's death. The question asked, "What was your response to discovering that Magdalena's mother was murdered in Nuevo Laredo? Were you moved, distracted or neutral?" This question emerged from the director of the staged reading (Jared Culverhouse) and his comment to me that introducing such a heavy plot point so late in the story might distract from the central conflict of the play. I agreed with his concern but felt that I simply needed to strengthen Magdalena's connection to her mother earlier in the play in order to help the audience track that element of the story. Responses to this question were overwhelmingly "in favor" of the mother's death for two reasons. The first was that it lent a realistic gravity to the play that one responder described as "painfully raw." While the discovery of the conquistador helmet is historically feasible, it still exists within a mode of "the theatrical." The death of the mother, someone trying to cross the border, is something that happens very frequently but is rarely remarked upon when one considers the human costs of American immigration policies. The second reason pertains to a simple structural issue: the mother's death gives Magdalena a reason and a means of leaving Chris and returning home to Mexico.

The staged reading marked the first significant moment in the development of *The Digger*. Not only did I realize that I was working with a compelling story that people wanted to hear and a story that people felt needed to be told, I also realized that it was now my duty to try and tell this story to the best of my abilities. In essence, before the

staged reading of the play I was the master of the story, and afterwards the story became the master of me.

Over most of the spring and early summer I let the script rest to give me the time and space to return to the project with a fresh pair of eyes. When I finally got back into the text I began reworking the development of Chris and Magdalena's relationship. My initial reaction was to simply expand their dialogue together in order to provide more content, but I realized that quality is more important than quantity. I would not fully put this idea into action until after the September production. Over the summer I also added in a new scene for Shane at the top of Act Two which helped flesh out his place in the story and also set a nice tone for the beginning of the second act. I experimented with the murder of Quichimin by creating a repetition of his death, having Wayne shoot him three different times, and after each time Pancho became less 'Indian'. The idea here was to show the development of post-colonial brainwashing through force, but this intellectual approach mitigated the "world of the play" and I was guided by my advisor, John Fleming, and the director of the fall production, Chuck Ney, to return to the original concept.

Production Changes

When I returned to Texas from a summer out of state I began to work with Chuck Ney on the script. Dr. Ney's ear for language and vision of the stage were extremely helpful and our collaboration was one of two parents thinking about what is best for the child. To return to a previously mentioned remark, our job was discover "what the story wants to be," and so we slowly cut out sections of the text and pieces of dialogue that did

not serve the story. We agreed on the majority of revisions with a few exceptions: Marta's role and the repetition of Wayne's saddle and storm speeches.

Dr. Ney's concerns with Marta was that her identity was unclear. In my own mind, she represented many things: Magdalena's mother, the Virgin of Guadalupe, a native spirit, and the unnoticed Mexican woman that performs "mundane" jobs in our society's institutions. What Dr. Ney helped me to do was to flesh this out and focus on the core of what she represented in order to enrich the story. Eventually, we settled on Marta being both the spirit-mother of Magdalena and a native spirit of the land. I rewrote certain stage directions to make this clear and gave Marta new actions, like remaining on the stage while César breaks the news of the mother's death to Magdalena, in order to clarify her role.

The second chief concern surrounded the repetition of Wayne's two large speeches at the end of Act One, a concern initially voiced by my advisor, John Fleming. I originally wanted the repetition in order to show how Wayne lives in a fantasy cowboy world and a perennial past. The problem is that an audience could potentially lose focus during the repetition, which is an unwanted affect during any point of a production, especially at the end of an act. The solution was to cut the second speech and to have Wayne speak the first speech about his saddle to himself while Quichimin is offstage. This choice solved both problems: we were able to show Wayne's senility and keep the action and focus moving.

As we entered into production, minor changes and cuts were made as the actors discovered new elements of their characters as well their inconsistencies. One of the more significant changes was to the Spanish in the text. While I am somewhat fluent in

the language, I am not yet at a level yet where I know the nuances of particular phrases. Benito Lara (playing César) and Juliana Vera (playing Marta) helped me to correct the grammar and spelling of the Spanish that I had originally placed in the script. Other changes came based out of cultural misunderstandings. For example, I had used the word “*curandero*” to refer to a black magician, but a *curandero* is in fact a healer. Thus Ms. Vera introduced “*espíritus malignos*” (bad spirits) to provide the correct meaning. About a week and a half before opening night we “froze” the script for the sake of the actors and the production. I continued to make notes and observations about the text but would not make any more changes until about two weeks after closing night.

Post-Production Changes

I was very pleased with the production and with the response that I received from the public, both professional and popular. I still had some structural concerns to resolve that were echoed in a critique by judges from the Kennedy Center’s American College Theatre Festival (ACTF) who attended the performance. When I sat down to revise the play, I made a number of changes, some small and some substantial, all in the hopes of helping “the story be what it wants to be.”

The first change that I made was to replace the title *Mute Point* with *The Digger*. This decision was made after realizing how much of the play is not only about Chris digging in the earth, but also about the others in the play who are digging into their pasts. Accordingly, I decided to start the play with Chris digging silently in the midden. This image allows the spectator to immediately see the core of the story: a man digging for artifacts.

In every draft of the play, including the one used in production, the character of Quichimin was identified as Pancho. The notion here is that this character realizes his true name after his transformation at the midden. I decided that it is a stronger choice for the director and the actor to have his name really be Quichimin. Another change that I made to Quichimin's character concerns his use of exclamatory language during the conflict at the midden in the middle of Act Two. The excessive use of exclamation points in this scene signals to the reader or actor that Quichimin is angry or blindly powerful. I decided that a more calm level of speech would strengthen his demeanor and heighten the potency of his intentions.

One comment that David Blakely (one of the ACTF judges) made to me is that many of the greatest dramatic works reference the conflict within the first pages of the text. What emerged from this conversation was the idea to have Wayne reference the armadillo infestation and the holes that they have apparently created at the top of the play. I find this to be a wise decision in that it helps set up the conflict between Wayne and Chris, as well as the connection between armadillos and digging, both of which serve to enrich the spectator's discovery of the story.

The most substantive changes came to the scenes between Chris and Magdalena, changes that have drastically altered the story of the play, but changes that I hope have only made it stronger. I decided to cut out the marriage proposal by Chris and thus his "standing her up" in Act Two when he decides to go and visit Wayne's ranch with Fred. I found that the wedding proposal and Chris's decision not to marry Magdalena a day later were too contrived and only mitigated the potential dynamic between these two lovers. I replaced the wedding proposal with a clear choice on Chris's part to not get

married for the time being, due to his fear of traditional commitment. In the scene where Chris had once stood Magdalena up, he now refuses to try on the Mexican wedding shirt that her mother sent him as a gift. He reiterates to Magdalena that he “comes from a broken home.” These changes have provided more insight into both characters, shortened the lengthy exposition of their first scene, and revealed the inner conflicts that Chris faces instead of seeing him as a mean-hearted individual who decides not to go through with marrying Magdalena a day after he made plans with her to do so. Given the changes in their inter-personal dynamic, I added in Magdalena leaving Chris a note that she has gone home to Apaseo, so that she does not fully “leave” him, but rather presents him with a choice to follow.

The script development of *The Digger* lasted about a year and passed through various phases of academic, artistic and popular review. As the playwright, I feel gifted to have been surrounded by such supportive professors and friends who encouraged me to tell this story to the best of my ability. Like the first works of any playwright, *The Digger* still has its flaws and peculiarities. Perhaps one day I might decide to return to this work and revise it again for a new time or place, or maybe I will see it in new light and choose to recast what is at its source. For now, I am content to move on to new stories, and hope that *The Digger* continues to live on by its own life force, if indeed it is a story that wants to be told.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE DIGGER

a play in two acts

by

Michael Pape

© December 2008

CHARACTERS: IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE

WAYNE, 70

QUICHIMIN, 25

MARTA, 60'S

CHRIS, 25

SHANE, 30

MAGDALENA, 24

FRED, 60

CÉSAR, 30

EMILIANO, 25

TIME

The present.

PLACE

A small town in the Texas Hill Country, north of San Antonio.

STAGE

The set consists of three dominant playing areas: a dug out burnt rock midden or "hole," a rocking chair and a spittoon, and a table and two chairs. The stage is sprinkled with earth, which in the original production was represented by a rough shredded paper.

ACT ONESCENE 1.1 : AT THE HOLE

The nighttime sounds of cicadas, crickets and little tree frogs slowly rise into the darkness. CHRIS turns on his headlamp and continues the rough excavation of his dig. He pulls out his last point of the night. He kneels down and looks over the seven arrowheads that he has taken in the night. He puts them into his bag, kisses his necklace for good luck and exits. He leaves his pick and shovel on stage.

The sounds of the night fade away as a soft light washes the stage and a song with rhythm and mood fades up. MARTA enters and brushes away the earth on the rocking chair and the spittoon. She pulls a gun out from the earth and sets it on the rocking chair. Marta picks up the pick and shovel and exits.

Scene 1.2 : WAYNE'S PORCH

(WAYNE is rocking in his chair, a rifle over his lap. There is a spittoon on the ground beside him. QUICHIMIN enters with an armful of fire wood. He stops in front of Wayne. Wayne spits into the spittoon.)

WAYNE

Well? Take it inside and stack it by the stove.

QUICHIMIN

Si, señor Wayne.

WAYNE

Call me jefe.

QUICHIMIN

Qué?

WAYNE

Call me jefe.

QUICHIMIN

Como quiera, jefe.

(Quichimin carries the wood inside. Wayne begins to sing 'The Yellow Rose of Texas,' spitting into the spittoon between phrases. Quichimin returns.)

WAYNE

Well, any luck with those armadillos?

QUICHIMIN

No.

WAYNE

No? Well what in the hell am I payin' ya for then?

(Silence)

WAYNE

I'm gonna have to figure out a way to trap those bastards... Well, Pancho, I reckon it's time to call her a day. Let's see now: you fed the chickens?

QUICHIMIN

Si.

WAYNE

You fed the goats?

QUICHIMIN

Si.

WAYNE
You fed the mule?

QUICHIMIN
Si.

WAYNE
You stripped them cedar posts?

QUICHIMIN
Si.

WAYNE
Good. How about the fence? Did you mend that fence where that big oak tree fell down?

QUICHIMIN
Si.

WAYNE
Well then, you cut it all up for fire wood?

QUICHIMIN
Si.

(A hawk above them cries and Quichimin looks up at it flying and points.)

QUICHIMIN
Mire!

(Wayne raises his rifle and shoots the hawk.)

Señor Wayne...

WAYNE
Jefe.

QUICHIMIN
Jefe. Por qué lo hizo... por qué?

WAYNE
Did you feed the horses?
(Pause)

WAYNE
Pancho? Did you feed the horses?

QUICHIMIN
Si.

WAYNE
Did you clean my saddle?

QUICHIMIN

Si.

WAYNE

Bring it here.

QUICHIMIN

Para qué?

WAYNE

Just bring it here, Pancho.

QUICHIMIN

Si, jefe.

(Quichimin exits. Wayne whistles 'Deep in the Heart of Texas', stomping the bus of his gun four quick times between lines. Quichimin enters with a saddle over his shoulder.)

WAYNE

Ah, my old saddle. What a beauty she is. Take a look, Pancho. This here is a fourteen-inch Frazier bronc bustin' saddle also known as the beartrap. Look here, swept fifteen-inch back swells, a solid nickel horn, that's a fourteen-inch seat, a five-inch cantle, spanish rigging with five and a half inch circle dees. The fleece and strings are tough and look here at this solid bull hide tree five-inch gullet and just take a look at the border tooling. Seen a lot of good country sittin' on top of this beartrap, Pancho. Before the barbwire cut this country up like a used and no-good whore and the highways strapped her down like the whore she had become. I remember when this country was a beautiful woman and you could ride up and down her just as free as the wind. Okie-doke, Pancho, you can take it back to the barn. Take it back and we'll call it a day.

QUICHIMIN

Si, jefe.

(Quichimin exits with the saddle. Wayne whistles. Quichimin enters with the dead hawk.)

WAYNE

What the hell are you doing with that bird?

QUICHIMIN

Nada.

WAYNE

You can't eat a hawk, stupid. It ain't a chicken.

QUICHIMIN

Yo sé.

WAYNE

Well, fine then. How many hours you work today?

QUICHIMIN

Diez.

WAYNE

Ten hours...ok. What do I owe ya fifty?

QUICHIMIN

Fifty?

WAYNE

Fifty. That was the deal. Five an hour so that makes fifty. I'll throw the hawk in as a bonus.

(Wayne pieces the cash together out of his billfold.)

You want some more work mañana?

QUICHIMIN

Si.

WAYNE

Good, there's plenty to do. There's always plenty to do, Pancho, 'cause the work of a rancher is never done. If you work hard I'll keep you on and teach you something about ranching since I know you Mexicans is under priveleged and all. Let's see...what the hell was I thinkin about? Oh right...tomorrow, we gotta track these damn armadillos down. They're still diggin up holes down by the river and enough is enough. Bueno?

QUICHIMIN

Bueno.

WAYNE

I like your attitude boy. Can you make it at eight?

QUICHIMIN

Si.

WAYNE

No, let's make it six/

QUICHIMIN

A las seis?

WAYNE

Si. Yes. Seis. Six o' clock. Early bird gets the frijoles.

QUICHIMIN

Si, Wayne.

Pancho. WAYNE

Si, jefe. QUICHIMIN

Hasta mañana. WAYNE

Hasta mañana. QUICHIMIN

(Quichimin exits offstage and Wayne gets up and whistles his way inside. Music rises as Marta enters. She covers up Wayne's rocker and spittoon and crosses exits.)

END SCENE

Scene 1.3 : LEAVING THE CONSTRUCTION SITE

(CHRIS and SHANE enter with tool belts slung over there shoulders, sweat stained and dirty, worn out.)

CHRIS

(Talking to his colleagues offstage.)

Adios, Margarito; Raul, adios, hasta mañana.

SHANE

Damn, I thought that day was never gonna end. Hard to keep up with those Mexicans, they're good workers, I just wish they spoke a little English once in a while. Where did you learn to speak Spanish, amigo?

CHRIS

My girl is from Mexico.

SHANE

No kiddin? Like, Mexican-American?

CHRIS

No, just Mexican.

SHANE

Mexican-Mexican.

CHRIS

Ya.

(Pause)

SHANE

So how do you like workin with this crew?

CHRIS

It's great, good group of guys it seems like. You know, I'm just happy to be working with my kid coming along and all.

SHANE

Well hell, congratulations! You know what it's gonna be yet?

CHRIS

No, we don't know, didn't check. Maggie's kind of superstitious.

SHANE

About what?

CHRIS

Oh, I don't know. She just thinks it's better to find out the old fashioned way.

SHANE

It's your first one right?

CHRIS

Yeah, it's the first.

SHANE

Well I hope it's a boy.

CHRIS

Why's that?

SHANE

So you don't gotta keep tryin. I mean, what if you have two, or three girls, and you get to wonderin, "well shit, three's a handful." Then its like a gamble you know: you want a boy, cause every man wants a son, but you ain't sure if you can handle a fourth girl. That's all I mean, the sooner you get a boy, it's uh... it's good.

CHRIS

Hey Shane, I gotta...

SHANE

Oh, Chris, sorry, man, but I been meanin' to ask you all day. Where'd you get that arrowhead?

(Shane points at Chris's necklace.)

CHRIS

What, this?

SHANE

Yeah.

CHRIS

I found it.

SHANE

No kiddin, just walkin' around and there it was, huh?

CHRIS

Not really. I was lookin for it.

SHANE

Lookin?

CHRIS

Diggin', actually.

SHANE

Diggin? Like you was diggin a post-hole or somethin' and there it was?

CHRIS

No, more like I was diggin' for arrowheads 'cause I knew where to look, just had to dig down to find them.

SHANE

No kiddin'?

CHRIS

No kiddin.

(Chris reaches into his pocket and pulls out an arrowhead, tosses it to Shane.)

Here ya go. I found this one last night. It's a Purdee.

SHANE

Sure is.

CHRIS

What?

SHANE

Pretty.

CHRIS

Oh, well it is. But I was sayin "Purdee". Pedernales.

(Pronounced "Perd-a-nales'.)

SHANE

Like the river.

CHRIS

Yep. That one is about 1000 years old.

SHANE

Well, Jesus. Thanks Chris. Wow, real Indians made this, huh?

CHRIS

Yep. That's the real deal. It's somethin' idn't it?

SHANE

Damn...wow. I ain't never touched anything that an Indian touched.

CHRIS

I bet you have and you just didn't know it.

SHANE

Doubt it.

CHRIS

Think about it, Shane. Texas hadn't even been Texas but for the last hundred and fifty years or so. Any tree you've climbed or pissed on that's over a couple hundred years old, or those rocks bluffs down at Percy's swimmin hole, or the river itself, Indians touched

CHRIS (CONTINUED)

all that stuff.

SHANE

I never even thought of that.

CHRIS

Not a lot of people do. And it won't be long before all these camps get washed away or covered up by the next wave of Houstonians hunting for paradise.

SHANE

Can I go with you sometime?

CHRIS

Diggin?

SHANE

Yeah.

CHRIS

Uh... I don't know, Shane, it's kinda...

SHANE

Kinda what?

CHRIS

Illegal.

SHANE

Diggin?

CHRIS

Trespassin. You gotta trespass to get to the diggin spots and you gotta be real... invisible.

SHANE

Well hell, I break the law just about every day drinkin a beer on the way home and they haven't caught me yet. But I understand, if you don't want to...

CHRIS

No, no, no, it's not like that. Hey, I'm going again tonight if you want to come along.

SHANE

Tonight! Well, hell yeah, it'll be good to get some time away from the old lady.

CHRIS

Don't get too excited there buddy, we gotta keep this stuff quiet.

SHANE

No problem.

CHRIS

Even to your girlfriend, see if you can't invent some kind of excuse or she'll be chattin'

CHRIS (CONTINUED)

all over town.

SHANE

No worries there, I go gamblin over at Dave's place a few times a week anyway, I'll just tell her I'm playin cards.

CHRIS

Good.

SHANE

What should I bring?

CHRIS

You got a little munchkin shovel?

SHANE

Yeah.

CHRIS

Alright, bring that, and the smallest pick you got, some gloves, and a light.

SHANE

No problem.

CHRIS

And some water, maybe somethin to eat.

SHANE

Can do. Where should I meet ya?

CHRIS

Underneath the second bridge on the way to Kendalia, you can park underneath it, and we'll walk up the river from there. Let's say nine.

SHANE

Thanks, Chris, this is gonna be great, I'm...

CHRIS

Shane, I gotta get going...

SHANE

Yeah, yeah, get on back to your baby. I'll see you at nine.

(Pause)

CHRIS

No you won't.

SHANE

What do you mean?

CHRIS

I thought you were playin' cards.

(Chris exits. Shane fondles the point as the lights dim expect for one blue spot that rests on his hand just as he's beginning to make his exit. Marta enters un uncovers the table and two chairs. She sets two bowls and spoons on the table then exits.)

END SCENE

SCENE 1.4 : CHRIS'S HOUSE

(Chris and MAGDALENA are sitting at the table.)

CHRIS

Mag-da-lena, that was delicious.

MAGDALENA

It was beans and rice, and pico de gallo. It's not a secret recipe.

CHRIS

It was still delicious.

MAGDALENA

Because you put honey all over your beans. Ay de mi...it drives me crazy. We've got some sugar too if the honey isn't sweet enough.

CHRIS

No, no, the honey's perfect.

MAGDALENA

What a gringo. You have no respect for your beans.

CHRIS

I have nothing but respect for all beans: pintos, negros, blancos, aztecas, limas...

MAGDALENA

Ay ay ay...

(Magdalena lovingly clobbers Chris and they laugh.)

CHRIS

So, what'd you do today, other than stirring the beans?

MAGDALENA

Nothing.

CHRIS

O come on, you did something.

MAGDALENA

I did some reading.

CHRIS

Marquez?

MAGDALENA

No, just some old college poly sci book.

CHRIS

Which one?

MAGDALENA

“Remember the Alamo, Companero.”

CHRIS

That was the Mexican side of the story?

MAGDALENA

More or less. It’s about the Tejanos living in San Antonio who were caught in the middle. Hey, maybe you could stop by the library tomorrow, get me something new, something light?

CHRIS

Of course. You got anything in mind?

MAGDALENA

Let me see... how about a fairy tale. Yeah, get me a fairy tale. We’ll need it anyway once the baby’s here.

CHRIS

Anything in particular?

MAGDALENA

No, not really. Just something sweet. No Brothers Grimm or Rumpelstilskin or anything creepy like that.

CHRIS

Something with a knight, in bright shining armor, that rescues his lady from the clutches of darkness.

(They share a long kiss.)

MAGDALENA

Yeah, something just like that. Oh!

CHRIS

What?

MAGDALENA

I finally got in touch with my mom this afternoon.

CHRIS

All right,baby...how long has it been? Two days?

MAGDALENA

It’s been a week.

CHRIS

Whoa...that must be a new record.

MAGDALENA

Oh shut up, she loves me and she wants to make sure that I’m okay.

CHRIS

I'm just kidding with you. You know I can't wait to meet her.

MAGDALENA

She'll love you. I wish she could be here for the birth. She sounded kind of funny today on the phone.

CHRIS

Funny?

MAGDALENA

I don't know, she sounded sad.

CHRIS

I'm sorry.

MAGDALENA

You know what she said? She said that she's going to cross the border like the men do. Can you imagine it? Little old Maria walking four days through the desert.

CHRIS

That'd be crazy.

MAGDALENA

I know. She knows. But she wouldn't be the first abuela to cross the border. She's tough and she's stubborn and it's just such a big deal to her. Her little girl is having her nieta... she supposed to be here.

CHRIS

You don't think she's serious do you?

MAGDALENA

It scares me, Chris. I'm her only girl. I know she can do it but it really does scares me. She's lonely.

CHRIS

You think any of your brothers could help get her up here?

MAGDALENA

Maybe. But it takes about four-thousand dollars to get smuggled across you know, or at least to smuggle an old woman across, and none of us have that.

CHRIS

What about César? I thought he had solid work outside Dallas?

MAGDALENA

César? I haven't heard from him in months. Look, we probably shouldn't worry about this, Chris. I don't know why I even brought it up. It's just that...

CHRIS

What?

MAGDALENA

I don't know. I think now that I'm about to be a mother I'm realizing how much my mother means to me, and the thought of her being all alone knowing that I'm about to give birth without any family around... it's sad. She asked about your mom...

CHRIS

About what?

MAGDALENA

She wanted to know if she'd be at the birth?

CHRIS

What did you tell her?

MAGDALENA

I told her that she couldn't make it.

CHRIS

You didn't tell her why I hope?

MAGDALENA

Of course not.

CHRIS

Good.

MAGDALENA

Is she still avoiding you?

CHRIS

That's putting it lightly.

MAGDALENA

She's still your mother.

CHRIS

She hasn't talked to me since I told her you were pregnant.

MAGDALENA

I was hoping maybe...

CHRIS

Nope...

MAGDALENA

And your dad is still...

CHRIS

Drunk? Ya. Look Maggie, I don't know why we need to get into all of this right now.

MAGDALENA

I'm sorry. I didn't mean to...

CHRIS

This isn't the American dream, Magdalena.

(Pause)

CHRIS

So, what did you tell your mom about mine?

MAGDALENA

About what?

CHRIS

About why she won't be at the birth.

MAGDALENA

I told her that she's sick.

CHRIS

Sick with what?

MAGDALENA

Heart problems.

CHRIS

She believed that?

MAGDALENA

It's true isn't it? I told her to pray for her.

CHRIS

Jesus.

MAGDALENA

What?

CHRIS

If my hard-ass Baptist mother knew that a Mexican Catholic was praying for her she'd really hate me.

MAGDALENA

Oh, Chris, she can't be that bad?

CHRIS

Christ, she's awful. She thinks y'all are all pagans feeding the saints enchiladas and chicken blood and that all Mexicans who sneak into the country and get jobs are actually secret revolutionary soldiers trying to take back America from the anglos.

MAGDALENA

You're kidding!

CHRIS

Kind-a, but you never know. She's out there. Anyway, I'm sorry you had to lie.

MAGDALENA

It's ok. She also asked about us.

CHRIS

What about us?

MAGDALENA

Come on Señor, the same thing she asks about everytime. She wants to know when we're getting married.

CHRIS

And...

MAGDALENA

I told her that you proposed but that we haven't decided on a date yet.

CHRIS

Well, aren't I romantic.

MAGDALENA

I had to tell her something. As far as she's concerned I'm still a single woman, and I'll be a single woman with a baby any day now. You know how it is for her, Chris. You're the father and so you should want to be my husband. It's as simple as that.

CHRIS

It's not as simple as that.

MAGDALENA

Don't you want to get married?

CHRIS

We've gone over this baby.

MAGDALENA

Well, we can go over it again.

CHRIS

I'm not a fan, Maggie. You know I love you, as far as I'm concerned we're already married. I don't see why we need the church or the state to get involved.

MAGDALENA

The state is already involved.

CHRIS

What do you mean the state is already involved?

MAGDALENA

I'm not a student anymore, Chris. Which means that I won't be legal here much longer. You that it would mean the world to my mother if we got married. But, even without her in the picture, we need to be thinking more about our future.

(Silence)

MAGDALENA

Chris?

CHRIS

We'll figure something out, Maggie. And you know I'll marry you if it comes down to that. Just give me some time, okay? Maggie?

MAGDALENA

Okay.

(Silence)

MAGDALENA

Hey, there's a documentary on PBS tonight that I thought you would like about Coronado and the search for El Dorado...

CHRIS

Maggie, you know that I'm going diggin tonight.

MAGDALENA

Perdon?

CHRIS

I'm going digging.

MAGDALENA

Again?

CHRIS

Sorry, Maggie, but I've got to keep at this mound. I don't know what it is but there's somethin big there. I can feel it.

MAGDALENA

Why don't you feel me? Baby... feel me.

(She puts his hand to her stomach.)

MAGDALENA

You feel that? Right here. Any day now, she...he...is gonna be out here in the world.

CHRIS

I know Maggie, I know. But this mound has got this energy about it...

MAGDALENA

Who cares about your mound, Chris!? I don't. You'll go out all night and come back tired and dirty at three in the morning and you'll be totally exhausted for work tomorrow...you'll probably pass out before we can get to the judge and for what...Baby, it's not worth the time.

CHRIS

It's worth every second to me, you know that Maggie. And eventually it's gonna be worth something more: money. You know I'm doin this for us, it's like a part time job.

MAGDALENA

You've been digging for three straight years and you haven't sold anything, Chris. You keep telling me, "Look at this one, baby. It's a Purdogh..."

CHRIS

Perdiz...

MAGDALENA

A Perdiz, whatever... "A perdiz, and it's worth hundreds and look at this one and that one and this one," but what have you sold Chris?

CHRIS

Look, Maggie, I'm trying to find something that's really worth a damn and I *am* gonna find it, the piece that'll sell the whole collection, and I know it's out there, and it's in this mound. Baby, when I find it, it's gonna be worth something big, something real big.

MAGDALENA

If you were really digging for money you would have stayed in school, you'd have gotten your degree, and they would have paid you to dig during the day instead of leaving your girl at home. Alone. All night.

CHRIS

Right.

MAGDALENA

You think I'm wrong?

CHRIS

I could have graduated but they still wouldn't give a shit about these mounds. I'd be sittin' behind my desk with a stack of papers and abstracts and shit without a single speck a dirt beneath my nails. Anthropologists, Archaeologists, they know these mounds are out here, all over the place, and they don't do shit about it, nothin'!

MAGDALENA

There's nothing to do, nothing new to find, nothing to say. Look at all the points you've brought home, they're all the same. It's like looking at rocks in the river.

CHRIS

Not to me, Maggie. Each one of these points tells a story. A story that hasn't been told in so long it's been forgotten. And those guys at the university, even old Fred, don't care about these mounds out here. They look at these middens and all they see is piles of trash, burnt rocks and bones... but once you get inside there's a story, and you may not find a jade statue or a gold medallion or some kind of Indiana Jones bullshit, but there's still a story...

MAGDALENA

And what exactly is that story, Chris? That people hunted? That they fought each other? That they cooked food over fires? So what? That's what people have been doing for thousands of years.

CHRIS

Look at this point, baby. Look at it. Feel it. It's a Nolan, about 4000 years old. Four thousand! Sure, it's just a piece of flint, but it was made by a man. A man with thoughts and dreams and a knowledge of the earth. He watched the seasons change and decided when to move his family, he survived. And without this point, he wasn't nothin. And nobody cares, baby, don't you see?

MAGDALENA

I see a little boy, diggin in the sand box, that's what I see.

CHRIS

It ain't no sandbox Maggie! Magdalena. Magdalena, it ain't no sandbox, ya hear! Me entiendez!?

MAGALENA

Shhhh! Do you want to know what I hear?

CHRIS

What do you hear Maggie?

MAGDALENA

I hear... your baby's little baby heart... beating inside of me. That's what I hear. Two hearts beating at the same time, with the same beat. I need to hear the third, god damn it. We need to hear the third.

CHRIS

Jesus!

(Pause. Chris moves away.)

MAGDALENA

Do you remember when we first met?

CHRIS

You were wearing a white dress.

MAGALENA

You looked like a wild animal.

CHRIS

I was a wild animal...

MAGDALENA

And that's why I love you, you're wild. I didn't fall in love with you for your money, and I don't care about your money now. I've always been poor. I just need you to be here.

CHRIS

I'm here.

MAGDALENA

Be here to love me.

CHRIS

I'll be here to love you.

(Magdalena motions for him to come to her. He goes to her and holds her from behind.)

MAGDALENA

I know you want to change the world, Chris. That's why I fell in love with you, because you care. But you need to let all these big ideas go and just slow down. Just be here with me. At home. That's all I'm asking you.

CHRIS

I know, Maggie, I know, I'm sorry. But I gotta go. One more time, that's all I'm askin. And if I don't find anything, not even a flake, it won't matter, I'll be done. I'm ready to be a father and a husband. I love you, you know that. I just know there's something's in this mound.

MAGDALENA

There is nothing in that mound!

CHRIS

Just tonight, Magdalena, one more night, and then it's over, I promise.

(Magdalena pulls away from him and drifts into the bedroom.)

CHRIS

I love you, baby. Sueña con los angelitos.

(Chris grabs his digging bag and exits. Magdalena comes back out and picks her phone up off the table. She returns to the bedroom. Marta enters to music and covers back up the table and chairs. She uncovers some of the digging tools near the mound and exits.)

END SCENE

SCENE 1.5 : THE MOUND

(Darkness. Sounds of the night. Chris and Shane are squatting/kneeling in the hole, digging. They wear headlamps. It is around two in the morning. Shane's body is already sore.)

SHANE

Well, shit-er-ee, this is one hell of a time. Can't get enough of this. Sure am glad I walked two miles through the woods to get here. Them fire ants don't bother me none, mosquitoes neither. What a hole we've dug! Yep, it's a fine hole. Yeah, buddy, this diggin's a blast, one hell of a time!

CHRIS

Shut up, Shane. Keep your voice down and keep diggin.

SHANE

I'm tired of diggin! Dig, dig, dig. There ain't nothin here!

CHRIS

There's something in this hole, Shane. Ya hear? Damn.

SHANE

How many you find again?

CHRIS

I don't know, five or six keepers.

SHANE

Let me see 'em.

CHRIS

Dig.

SHANE

Let's trade places.

CHRIS

This is my zone, Shane.

SHANE

Well, my zone ain't worth a shit. Nothin but rocks and dirt and roots and more rocks...and god damn fire ants.

CHRIS

You just ain't lookin right. I bet you already dug out as many points as me and just hadn't seen 'em.

(Chris starts sifting through Shane's pile of dirt.)

SHANE

I'm diggin the same as you, Chris. Dig, scrape, sift. Dig, scrape, sift. Keep diggin Shane, keep scraping Shane, keep sifting Shane, keep diggin Shane...I'm tired a diggin!

CHRIS

Look.

(Chris pulls a point out of Shane's pile of dirt.)

Damn, it's a good one too.

SHANE

Son of a bitch. Let me see it.

CHRIS

There you go, buddy, your first point.

SHANE

Well yippee-kay-yay-yeh.

CHRIS

Keep diggin.

SHANE

You're crazy, you know that?

CHRIS

Yep.

SHANE

I think it's gonna rain.

CHRIS

It will.

SHANE

How do you know?

CHRIS

I can smell it.

SHANE

Let's get out of here.

CHRIS

Go on if you want.

SHANE

I should have gone a long time, ago. Five hours of my life wasted away in a god-damn hole. I could-a been playin cards at Davy's. My girl's gonna give me hell anyway, might as well have won some money.

CHRIS

I thought you said you usually lose.

SHANE

Apparently it's my luck.

CHRIS

You know what your problem is, Shane?

SHANE

Yeah.

CHRIS

You're impatient.

SHANE

The hell I am!

CHRIS

Then keep diggin.

SHANE

I'm gonna eat a snack. You got anything left.

CHRIS

Maybe.

SHANE

Well?

CHRIS

Well, I said maybe.

SHANE

Maybe what?

CHRIS

Maybe I've got some snackins left.

SHANE

Do you or don't you?

CHRIS

I don't know! If I do, it may be in my bag.

SHANE

Can I...

CHRIS

Yes! Get yourself a god damn snack.

SHANE

Nothin. Not a damn thing. Shit. Did you hear that?

CHRIS

Don't wet your pants, Shane. It was probably just an armadillo or a coon sniffin' around.

(A thunder cracks and the sound of a light rain rises.)

SHANE

Perfect.

(Chris begins to sing.)

CHRIS

De la sierra morena, cielito lindo, vienen bajando.

Un par de ojitos negros, cielito lindo, de contrabando.

Ay ay ay ay, canta y no llores

Porque cantando se alegran, cielito lindo, los corazones

Ay ay ay ay, canta y no llores...

SHANE

(Chris is still singing: 'Ay ay ay ay, canta y no llores...')

Ay ay ay ay, fuck you Chris! I'm through with this shit. God damn fire ants and worthless fucking arrowheads that I can't find, and rain!

CHRIS

(Softly laughing.)

Fine by me.

SHANE

Hey, fuck you man. This has been nothing but a pain in my ass.

CHRIS

Then get the hell out of here. I brought you along because you wanted to come, so either quit complaining or go home.

SHANE

Well, thank you kindly, asshole. I wish you would have told me what a pain in the ass this was gonna be.

CHRIS

Sorry to ruin your night.

(Shane gathers his things and starts to leave.)

You gonna take your point?

SHANE

I didn't find it.

CHRIS

It's your point, Shane. Take it.

(Chris tosses the point to Shane.)

SHANE

Thanks.

(Shane exits. Pause. He re-enters.)

SHANE

How the hell do I get back to my truck?

CHRIS

Follow the bread crumbs.

SHANE

C'mon asshole.

CHRIS

Just stick to the river, cross it before the first set of falls, then cross back again before the second set, and then just keep to the bank until you get to the bridge.

SHANE

Thanks.

CHRIS

De nada.

(Shane exits. Chris takes a quick breather. He looks into his pack and pulls out a granola bar. He eats half and puts it back in. He resumes digging, and he sings Cielito Lindo again but in a less emphatic way as before, as he's just singing to himself now. As he digs, native drums begin to play softly and Marta appears above. Thunder sounds. Marta begins lightly shaking a rattle and sings "ini wika dinquali clanesi (twice) tokla sokla nansi (three times) intepeyaka," under her breath. Chris's shovel hits something that makes a metal-on-metal clang. He scratches around in the hole. The drums go louder as he scratches in the dirt. The rain and rattle pick up and the thunder booms. Then all sounds cease. Chris exposes the conquistador helmet, and a blue light shines from above into the hole. Chris, in a near trance, slowly walks out of the hole, overcome with his find. He freezes.)

END SCENE

SCENE 1.6 : CHRIS'S HOUSE

(Three in the morning. Magdalena enters with a candle, wearing a red shawl over her nightgown. She sings as she waits for Marta to clear the earth from the table and chairs and then she sits down. Marta exits.)

MAGDALENA

Duérmete mi niño.
Duérmete mi sol.
Duérmete pedazo,
De mi corazón.

(Chris puts the helmet into his bag. He is, wet and tired, completely dirty. He carries a stunned gaze in his eyes.)

MAGDALENA

Did you find what you were looking for?

CHRIS

No. No I didn't. Can't sleep?

MAGDALENA

No. The baby's kicking like crazy.

(Chris goes to her, feels her stomach.)

CHRIS

It must be the rain.

MAGDALENA

What do you know about babies?

CHRIS

Instincts.

MAGDALENA

When I don't rest the baby doesn't rest, and I can't rest because you're gone. I get restless, waiting for you to come home. Are you drunk?

CHRIS

Kinda. But I haven't been drinkin.

MAGDALENA

What's going on?

CHRIS

I've got no idea.

MAGDALENA

You didn't find it did you...

CHRIS

I was sure it was there, like it was calling out my name. But I wasn't supposed to find it.

MAGDALENA

Well, it's all over now.

CHRIS

There was some kind of music.

MAGDALENA

What are you talking about, Chris? You're not making any sense.

(Chris pulls the helmet out and places it on the table. He drops the bag down on the floor.)

Dios mio por favor. Chris, what...

CHRIS

I know.

MAGDALENA

Is that...

CHRIS

Ya.

(Magdalena shudders.)

CHRIS

Magdalena, what's wrong?

MAGDALENA

I don't know... I'm cold.

CHRIS

It's hot in here.

MAGDALENA

I think it's a little scary.

CHRIS

Scary? This is sacred. Do you know how old this thing must be? Something civilized in a pile full of old cinders and stones.

MAGDALENA

I don't know. I think it's creepy.

CHRIS

It's the creepiest thing to happen to me in my whole life. You should have seen me when I found it, Maggie. It was almost like in a dream, when you believe what's happenin but in the back of your mind you know it can't be real. But it is, Maggie, it's as real as real can be.

MAGDALENA

I'm sorry.

CHRIS

Sorry for what, baby? Don't be sorry...

MAGDALENA

I didn't believe you.

CHRIS

It's ok, baby. I was crazy. You would have been crazy to believe me.

MAGDALENA

How much do you think it's worth?

(Chris begins coming out of his 'trance'.)

CHRIS

Worth? I don't know. Thousands I guess. I don't know.

MAGDALENA

How are you going to sell it?

CHRIS

Sell it? I don't know. I was thinking...

MAGDALENA

Why don't you drive down to San Antonio tomorrow and see Fred. I bet he can help figure something out.

CHRIS

Yeah, I bet he could.

MAGDALENA

Do you think he's still mad at you?

CHRIS

For dropping out?

MAGDALENA

You were his favorite student.

CHRIS

Well, if he hasn't already put the past behind him he's going to just as soon as he sees this helmet. I mean... look at this. He hasn't seen any action in years. He's gonna be proud of me for dropping out and following my instincts.

MAGDALENA

Nice imagination.

CHRIS

Even if Fred can't help me, I'll figure something else out. All those nights digging away

CHRIS (CONTINUED)

like a madman and look what I found. Maybe we'll make enough money to figure out a way to get your mom over here, she could come live with us, no more dirt floor Guanajuato life for my baby's grandma, no ma'am, we're gonna be civilized, Maggie. No more wild man.

(CHRIS puts on helmet.)

Only the gentleman.

MAGDALENA

But baby, I like the wild man. Let's go to bed.

CHRIS

Before we're married? How scandalous...

(CHRIS and MAGDALENA exit into the bedroom. Marta enters to music and covers the table and a chair. She takes an other chair across the stage for FRED. Marta exits.)

END SCENE

SCENE 1.7 : FRED'S OFFICE

(Fred is sitting in his chair reading. Chris knocks.)

FRED

C'mon in.

(Chris enters. A moment of silence.)

CHRIS

Hi, Fred.

FRED

Well, I'll be.

CHRIS

How you doin Fred?

FRED

Same ole.

CHRIS

It's good to see you, Fred.

FRED

You too, Chris. How's life?

CHRIS

Same ole.

FRED

Mexico?

CHRIS

Never left.

FRED

What kept you?

CHRIS

A Mexican.

FRED

Married?

CHRIS

Not yet.

FRED

Pregnant?

CHRIS

Claro.

FRED

All American. So, what's going on? I thought you had exiled yourself from anything academic.

CHRIS

Well, I wanted to show you a couple of things that I've found. See what you think.

FRED

Still digging?

CHRIS

Of course. You know me.

FRED

I'm surprised you haven't been caught yet.

CHRIS

I guess I'm lucky.

FRED

Well, let's have a look.

(Chris gets his bag and brings it over to the desk.)

CHRIS

Well, there's this one.

FRED

Not bad, Abasolo?

CHRIS

That's what I think.

FRED

Nice consistent beveling.

CHRIS

Yeah, it's pretty good. Let's see...ah, here we go.

FRED

Pedernales, pretty tangs, translucent churt.

CHRIS

This one's nice.

FRED

Oh yeah. That's a classic Nolan. Well...

CHRIS

Well, what?

FRED

Well, I've got about ten thousand of these collecting dust in the basement.

CHRIS

I know.

FRED

I know you know. That's why I said, "Well..."

CHRIS

Well... I bet you don't have one of these in your basement.

(Chris pulls the helmet out.)

FRED

You're kidding.

CHRIS

Yep, just came by to play a little joke on old Fred. No, I'm not kidding.

FRED

You're not kidding.

CHRIS

It's the real deal.

FRED

Holy shit.

(Fred gets up and locks the door to his office. He returns and motions for the helmet.)

Where did you find this?

CHRIS

Where else? In a mound.

FRED

I know, I meant where where? On the Nueces?

CHRIS

No, the Guadelupe.

FRED

Hot damn. It's a comb morion.

CHRIS

What's that?

FRED

It's the style of helmet. Most people think that only the Spanish wore this one but it was

FRED (CONTINUED)

actually quite popular throughout Europe during the Renaissance. Of course this beauty must have been from one of the Spanish expeditions during the 1600s.

CHRIS

I want to sell it, Fred.

FRED

Sell it?

CHRIS

Can you help me?

FRED

I don't know, Chris. It's not easy to sell these type of things. We'd have to get it authenticated and the location of the dig would have to be revealed, which I doubt you'd like to do, since that would move the ownership of the helmet from you to the owner of the land, and probably move you into jail.

CHRIS

Ouch.

FRED

Yeah. Anytime you're dealing with this level of antiquities the bureaucracy gets thick, mainly in order to verify the authenticity of the object. A few decades back the market was a lot more loose, and you could move artifacts all day long.

CHRIS

C'mon, Fred, I need your help with this. I got a pregnant girlfriend at home and a baby coming any day.

FRED

I didn't realize y'all were that far along.

CHRIS

Any day.

FRED

You picked one hell of a time to find this helmet.

CHRIS

Tell me about it. At the same time the timing is perfect. We're broke, Fred. I've got to make this happen soon. I need you, man.

FRED

Let me think. You need to own that helmet. And in order for you to own it, you need to own your own land, so that you can find it, and then, technically, it's yours.

CHRIS

I don't own any land, Fred, I live in a trailer.

FRED

Then you're screwed.

CHRIS

There's gotta be a way, Fred.

FRED

I've got an idea, but you probably won't like it.

CHRIS

What?

FRED

You could give it to the university.

CHRIS

Give it?

FRED

Well, I didn't mean for free.

CHRIS

Then what do you mean?

FRED

A degree.

CHRIS

What's that worth?

FRED

More than what breaking your back will get you I can tell you that.

CHRIS

I need money.

FRED

Exactly. That's what getting a degree will give you, at least the second one, anyway.

CHRIS

The second one...I didn't want the first. It's a joke, Fred.

FRED

Then what are you doing here? Coming to me with this shit?

CHRIS

I didn't mean that you...

FRED

I know what you mean. But as much as you'd like to believe that civilization is going to collapse, it's not going to happen. So you better wise up, buddy. You're a bright kid. Take my advice on this one. You never took it before, but take it now. I'm offering you a

FRED (CONTINUED)

one way ticket through all the bullshit you refused to deal with.

CHRIS

How?

FRED

Independent study. You've been doing your own research, your own field work for a year now, I can get you credit for that. You turn that helmet over to the university and the trustees will shit their pants collectively around the board table. They'll sign the papers without blinking an eye. Document this experience and people will be reading your work all over the country. We'll host a conference... you'll be honored and have a free ride to any graduate program you want...and they'll pay you to go to school. Shit, Chris, they'll pay you to dig, imagine that. If you want to try and sell the helmet, fine. I'll keep my mouth shut and wish you the best of luck. But all you're gonna get is some chump change that you'll end up blowing in a year and you won't have anything to show for it. Work with me and this find will pay out the rest of your life. You still think that's a joke? Think it over.

(Pause.)

CHRIS

You sure about this?

FRED

Sure.

CHRIS

Let's do it.

FRED

Atta' boy.

CHRIS

I'm sorry for being such a jerk about it.

FRED

No worries. I'm a teacher. I'm trained to deal with jerks.

CHRIS

They trained you well. So...

FRED

We've still got a little problem though.

CHRIS

What's that?

FRED

The question of ownership.

CHRIS

Right.

FRED

You know whose ranch you were diggin on?

CHRIS

Yeah, it's the Wayne Winger Ranch, outside Hillsdale.

FRED

Look, here's what we'll do. We'll go down there and talk to the owner, and see if he won't let us walk his land. We'll tell him we're doing a survey for possible archeological sites.

CHRIS

You think he'll buy it?

FRED

It's a pretty good story, and he'll probably be interested.

CHRIS

But how does that give us ownership of the helmet?

FRED

It doesn't, but we'll get a read out of the owner. Once he lets us on the property, if he lets us on, we can tell him that we'd like to set up a dig. We'll draw up a contract that anything we find belongs to the university, and he can get a tax write-off on the value of the artifacts.

CHRIS

Damn.

FRED

Pretty good, eh?

CHRIS

Pretty damn good. When can you go?

FRED

It'll have to be after I get back from Mexico.

CHRIS

Mexico?

FRED

Yeah. I've got to go to a conference in Mexico City that kicks off this weekend. I won't get back until the end of next week.

CHRIS

C'mon Fred, we've got the comb morion here and you're gonna go to some conference?

FRED

It's part of the job. Just be patient and we'll get all this moving when I get back.

CHRIS

Can't we just swing through Winger's place to see if he's even on board? Cause if he's not then we gotta start thinking about a new plan. C'mon Fred, do it for Maggie's sake.

FRED

Maggie?

CHRIS

Magdalena.

FRED

What's she got to do with this?

CHRIS

She doesn't like the helmet. She's superstitious about everything and she's an emotional wreck right now waiting for the baby. I could be a father before you even get back from Mexico. The sooner I can get a handle on what's going on here the easier my life is gonna be.

FRED

Well, I've got a window this afternoon, between three and six?

CHRIS

Perfect.

FRED

Let's see, here. I finish teaching at 1:30, how about we meet at the Kendalia Café at three. You know the one?

CHRIS

Sure do.

FRED

Alright. Three it is.

(Pause.)

CHRIS

Thanks a lot Fred. This means a lot to me.

FRED

To tell you the truth, it's been a long time since I've been excited about my job.

CHRIS

It's good to see you excited, Fred. Hasta pronto.

FRED

Adios.

(Lights fade and music rises as Fred exits. Marta enters and returns the chair to its original position and then covers it with earth. She then uncovers Wayne's rocker and

spittoon before her exit.)

END SCENE

SCENE 1.8 : WAYNE'S PORCH

(Wayne rocks in his chair with his rifle. Quichimin enters from the house with a stack of fire wood in his arms. Wayne spits into the spittoon.)

WAYNE

Well? Take it on over to the wood pile, it aint doin' me no good inside.

QUICHIMIN

Si, cabron.

WAYNE

Call me jefe.

QUICHIMIN

Qué?

WAYNE

Call me jefe.

QUICHIMIN

Como quiera, jefe, cabron.

(Quichimin exits. Wayne sings. Quichimin returns.)

WAYNE

Good work there, Pancho. Let's see now... you fed the chickens?

QUICHIMIN

Si.

WAYNE

You fed the goats?

QUICHIMIN

Si.

WAYNE

You fed the mule?

QUICHIMIN

Si.

WAYNE

You stripped them cedar posts?

QUICHIMIN

Si.

WAYNE

How about the fence, did you mend that fence where the big oak tree fell down?

QUICHIMIN

Si.

WAYNE

You got it all cut up for fire wood?

QUICHIMIN

Si.

WAYNE

Did you feed the horses?

QUICHIMIN

Si.

WAYNE

Did you clean my saddle?

QUICHIMIN

Si.

WAYNE

Bring it here.

QUICHIMIN

Ay, por qué?

WAYNE

Just bring it to me.

QUICHIMIN

Si, jefe.

(Quichimin exits. Wayne gazes.)

WAYNE

My old saddle. A fourteen-inch Frazier bronc bustin' saddle... a solid nickel horn, that's a fourteen-inch seat, a five-inch cantle, spanish rigging with five and a half inch circle dees. Take a look at the border tooling. Seen a lot of good country sittin' on top of this beartrap, Pancho.

(Quichimin enters with the saddle.)

WAYNE

Before the barbwire cut this country up like a used and no-good Oh. Pancho. Okie-doke, Pancho, you can take it back to the barn. No, just wait a minute, we've got to get to work on this armadillo problem!

QUICHIMIN

Si, jefe.

(Wayne begins to lose control of himself.)

WAYNE

Alright, Pancho. Listen up. I don't know about what's going on down old Mexico way, but in Texas we've got an armadillo infestation. Damn critters are taking over. They've been diggin holes down by the river the size of a fat man's grave, which leads me to believe that they must be a mutated breed of giant armadillo. I talked with Old Joe Clark down the way and he thinks it must be a plot by the real estate mafia to run us off our land and sell out to the city boys and their subdivisions. Bullshit! This is my land! And there ain't nobody or no critter gonna shake me off it. I've busted too many broncs in my day to fall off this pony. At any rate, I want you to go fill in those holes so my horses don't fall in em while they're grazin. And if you see one, hurry back up here to the house so I can come down with my rifle and kill em. You got all that?

QUICHIMIN

Si.

WAYNE

Bueno. Get a shovel out of the barn and don't go taking no siesta while your down there, ya hear?

QUICHIMIN

Si.

WAYNE

Well, get on.

QUICHIMIN

Si, si.

(Quichimin and Wayne exit. Marta enters holding a dress and a shirt. She covers the rocker and spittoon. She uncovers the table and chairs and exits.)

END SCENE

SCENE 1.9 : CHRIS'S HOUSE

(Chris enters with an armful of children's books. He carries the helmet in his bag.)

CHRIS

Miel-ita bonita!

(Magdalena enters from the bedroom.)

MAGDALENA

Frijolero!

CHRIS

How is my little mamacita?

MAGDALENA

Mas o menos. The baby has been restless. I think we're getting close.

CHRIS

Oh, we're close, baby. I can feel it, too.

(Chris sets his backback down.)

CHRIS

Hey, I got the books from the library you wanted, some of the classics... Rapunzel, Snow White, The Little Mermaid, they had a few native ones too baby, like the The Legend of the Bluebonnet, The Indian Paintbrush and The...

(Magdalena interrupts him with a long kiss.)

CHRIS

What was that for?

MAGDALENA

Instincts, I guess.

(They kiss again.)

MAGALENA

Well, how'd it go?

CHRIS

With Fred?

MAGDALENA

Si!

CHRIS

It went great and it was really good to see him...

MAGDALENA

Did he say how much it's worth?

CHRIS

Not exactly, but it definitely made an impression on him so I think it's safe to say that it's worth a lot.

MAGDALENA

Oh, Chris, I'm so excited.

CHRIS

We can't sell it though.

MAGDALENA

Oh. Why not?

CHRIS

It's too risky.

MAGDALENA

What's risky?

CHRIS

Apparently, museum grade artifacts are hard to sell without going through lots of bureaucracy, and because, technically, after all the paperwork is done... I've stolen this helmet from someone else's land.

MAGDALENA

I thought it went great and you're telling me that you're a thief. What's great about that?

CHRIS

Everything is cool. Just give me a second, por favor.

MAGDALENA

Ok.

CHRIS

Fred's going to help me make everything legit, so instead of selling the helmet, we're going to make it a university affair. Basically, he said that he can get the university to cut a deal with me, so that I can get a degree out of the deal and who knows what other kind of opportunities and the university collections gets to keep the helmet.

MAGDALENA

What do they want to do with the helmet?

CHRIS

I told you baby, it's a huge find. Even Fred said so. It's just that it's more important as a piece of history than as a collector's item. Not to mention that it's practically impossible to sell it for what its worth without drawing the attention of some kind of authorities.

MAGDALENA

And he didn't say how much it was worth?

CHRIS

No, we didn't even get around to talkin' about it. But look baby, we can move back into San Antone now if you want too. If I go back to school I can get some kind of benefits for us. You can even get back into school as soon as the baby is big enough to spend a little time without you. We're going nowhere out here. You've got no friends close by and I'm tired of building houses for yuppies from Houston. You know what I'm tryin' to say, baby?

MAGDALENA

It's just a surprise that's all.

CHRIS

Tell me about it. Hey, I was thinking on the drive back from San Antone...

MAGDALENA

What?

CHRIS

Are you sure you want to wait before we decide on a name for the nino?

MAGDALENA

Pretty sure, why? Did you come up with a new one?

CHRIS

Maybe.

MAGDALENA

What is it?

CHRIS

Pedernales.

(Pronounced "Perd-a-nal-es'.)

MAGDALENA

Pedernales. Like the river?

CHRIS

Yeah.

MAGDALENA

(With Spanish pronunciation.)

Pedernales. It means flint.

CHEIS

Flint? I never even knew that. That's awesome.

MAGDALENA

It's a rock. I think we'll just wait.

CHRIS

You're the jefe.

MAGDALENA

You've got that right.

CHRIS

So, Magdalena, I...

MAGDALENA

Hold that thought, I've got a little surprise for you, just wait right here.

(Magdalena exits into the bedroom. Chris gets the helmet out of the bag and plays with it. He puts it on. Marta's rattle is heard somewhere softly. Magdalena enters with a white Mexican style wedding dress and a Guayabera Mexican wedding shirt for Chris. Chris takes off the helmet.)

CHRIS

What's that?

MAGDALENA

They came in the mail today. My mother sent them. Let's try them on.

(She hands Chris his shirt and she pulls the dress over her. She does not see that Chris is not trying on his shirt.)

CHRIS

I'm heading over to the ranch with Fred.

MAGDALENA

Won't you try your shirt on?

CHRIS

Not now.

MAGDALENA

Why?

CHRIS

Maggie, please.

MAGDALENA

It's a gift from my mother, do you know what that means?

CHRIS

I come from a broken home, Maggie. I come from a broken home. I've got to go to the ranch now, okay?

(Chris puts the helmet into his bag as Magdalena fades away into the bedroom. Chris exits. Long pause. Magdalena comes back into the light, she's been crying. She sits down at the table, and looks over the books. She

picks one up.)

MAGDALENA

Do you want to hear a story, niña? How about: *The Little Mouse and the Armadillo: A Native American Folk Tale*. I've never heard of this one. Hummm.

(She opens up the book and begins to read.)

Once upon a time, before time was counted by ticks and by tocks, a little mouse fell out of a tree, and into the river below.

Luckily for the little mouse, a piece of driftwood was floating downstream, and so he scurried up on top of it. As the piece of wood drifted farther down the river, the little mouse realized that he was getting farther and farther away from his home.

At first, the little mouse was very scared...

but soon he started to enjoy watching the world pass by. He saw mountains...deserts...and giant forests.

He saw fish, birds and deer. He saw every thing his little mouse eyes could see.

One day the river began to grow wider, and wider, and finally the river became so wide that it didn't look like the river at all, but one big sky full of water.

The little mouse was very scared and he began to cry and cry. A silver catfish heard his cries and came to him. "Little Mouse, why are you crying." The little mouse looked at him and said, "Please, silver catfish, help me get back to my family in the meadow, for I am tired of my adventure on the water."

The silver catfish winked at the little mouse and gave him a smile, so the little mouse jumped on his back and off they did go.

The Silver Catfish swam all the way back up the river, past the giant forests, deserts and mountains, until he finally came to the meadow of the little mouse, the meadow of his home.

The little mouse was overcome with joy. He scurried off the catfish's back and waved him goodbye and then started running up into the meadow to see all his family and friends again, and to tell them about his adventure.

But as the little mouse approached the meadow, he immediately saw that his home was not the same.

Large holes were everywhere about the meadow, and large mice, covered in armor were milling about.

"Pssst!" came a voice from the hollow of a near by tree. "Come here, quickly."

The little mouse recognized the voice as that of his cousin, so he ran as fast as he could into the hollow of the tree.

"Cousin," said the little mouse, "what has happened to our home? Who are these giant mice, covered in armor, destroying everything?"

The cousin responded, "Little Mouse, it is good to see that you have made it home, but it is also sad. While you were gone, the giant mice covered in armor came, and they took over our meadow, and now they make us live in the hollows of trees, and in the old holes that they've dug that they no longer use, so that we will be out of their way. Our beautiful meadow is no more."

A she-hawk was flying through the air that day, and she heard the story. She told it to me, to tell me why to this day, mice still live in holes.

(Magdalena clutches the book and tries to call her mother.

Marta appears and lightly shakes her rattle. Magdalena hangs up and exits to the bedroom. Marta covers the table and chairs as Pancho enters. She continues to rattle and slowly exits.)

END SCENE

SCENE 1.10 : AT THE MOUND

Quichimin enters with a shovel and he looks around a bit before he finds the hole. He begins filling the hole back in with dirt. After three or four shovel-loads, Quichimin stops, and picks up a broken arrowhead. He holds it up to the light. The drums rise again, softly. Marta appears above him. Quichimin looks around, and begins digging the dirt out of the hole. After three or four shovels worth, he sets the shovel down and starts digging with his hands. The drums rise. Quichimin begins digging a little faster and then takes off his shirt. He digs and digs then stops. He pulls out a six inch Clovis knife blade. The drums stop. He stands up in the hole. A hawk cries above him. Marta drops a feather from the sky. Quichimin grabs the feather. He stands downstage holding the point in one hand and the feather in the other. The drum music rises again and then stops. Quichimin looks ahead. Blackout.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWOSCENE 2.1 : CHRIS'S HOUSE

(Magdalena is pacing the room, waiting for her mother to pick up the phone.)

MAGDALENA

Ay mami, contestame por favor, contestame. Por que no me contestas? Te necesito. Ay mami, contestame, contestame, contestame.

(She hangs up the phone and dials again. She paces. A knock on the door. She hangs up the phone.)

MAGDALENA

Who is it?

SHANE

Shane.

MAGDALENA

Who?

SHANE

I work with Chris. I just came by to see him.

MAGDALENA

Chris isn't home.

SHANE

Is he ok? He didn't come to work today.

(Pause. Magdalena opens the door.)

SHANE

Hi.

MAGDALENA

Hello.

SHANE

You must be Chris's wife.

MAGDALENA

My name is Magdalena.

SHANE

Shane.

MAGDALENA

Right.

SHANE

Is Chris okay?

MAGDALENA

I guess so.

SHANE

We were all wonderin' why he didn't come to work today. He didn't call or nothin'.

MAGDALENA

He's been a little occupied.

SHANE

I thought he might of just slept in. I went diggin' with him last night and I didn't think he was ever gonna leave that hole. I had to kinda cover for him at work today.

MAGDALENA

I'm sorry, Shane. I'm really tired. Do you want to leave a note for Chris or something?

SHANE

No. Just tell him that I came by, and, I wanted to leave him this arrowhead.

(Shane pulls the point out of his pocket and tries to hand it to Magdalena.)

MAGDALENA

Just put it on the table if you don't mind.

SHANE

Sure.

MAGDALENA

Did he forget it or something?

SHANE

No. He gave it to me. But it didn't feel right. He found it not me. I mean it was in my pile, but still. I, I, it didn't feel right that's all. I hope he understands.

MAGDALENA

I'll make sure he gets the message.

SHANE

Chris told me y'all are expecting the baby any day now.

SHANE

Y'all got any names in mind yet?

MAGDALENA

I like Guadalupe.

SHANE

Like the river?

MAGDALENA

Like the virgen.

SHANE

Uh...?

MAGDALENA

Like the virgin.

SHANE

Oh. And if it's a boy?

MAGDALENA

I'm sorry, Shane, I'm really tired.

SHANE

Can I get you a glass of water or something?

MAGDALENA

No, thank you though. I just need some rest. I'll let Chris know you stopped by.

SHANE

Thanks. And tell him to give the boss a call. Work's getting tight with the economy and all and it'd be best if he stayed on good terms with the crew.

MAGDALENA

I'll tell him.

SHANE

Okay. Bye now. Nice to meet you.

MAGDALENA

Bye, bye, Shane. Nice to meet you too.

SHANE

Adios.

*(Shane exits. Marta enters and covers the table and chairs.
She uncovers Wayne's rocker and spittoon and exits.)*

END SCENE

SCENE 2.2 : WAYNE'S HOUSE

(Fred and Chris enter and walk up to Wayne's porch.)

FRED

This is it.

CHRIS

I guess it is.

FRED

Let me do most of the talking.

CHRIS

You got it.

(Wayne waits in his rocker with rifle aimed at them.)

WAYNE

Who the hell are y'all?

FRED

Sorry to bother you, Mr. Winger.

WAYNE

How the hell do you know my name?

FRED

It's in the phone book.

WAYNE

Then why the hell didn't you call?

FRED

I tried.

WAYNE

Then why the hell didn't you leave a message?

FRED

You don't have an answering machine.

(Pause.)

WAYNE

Just checkin'. Well, what's your business?

FRED

My name's Fred Wilkenson and I'm a professor down in San Antone.

WAYNE

Professor a what?

FRED

Archaeology. This is Chris, one of my students.
And we're conducting a survey of the Guadelupe River.

WAYNE

I don't take surveys.

FRED

Well, it's not a survey survey. It's more of a look-over survey in order to find any potential sites for archaeological research.

WAYNE

And what the hell does that mean?

FRED

It means that we're looking for old Indian camps.

WAYNE

Well, I ain't seen no tipis around here, so you fellas have a nice day.

FRED

Excuse me, sir, what we're looking for is underground. It's been buried by floods and time and...

WAYNE

Don't he talk?

FRED

Of course...

WAYNE

Well let him talk.

CHRIS

Hello Mr. Winger.

WAYNE

Hi.

CHRIS

Hi.

WAYNE

Anyway, what were you saying?

FRED

I was saying that these sites are...

WAYNE

Underground... right. Well, what are you looking for, arrowheads?

FRED

Exactly, but there's a number of other things too.

WAYNE

Like what?

FRED

Stone tools, the occasional pottery or jewelry, metates...

WAYNE

What's that?

FRED

What, metate?

WAYNE

Yeah.

FRED

It's a stone used for grinding pecans.

WAYNE

Pecans?

FRED

Or acorns.

WAYNE

Metate?

FRED

Yes.

WAYNE

So it's a stone.

FRED

Sure.

WAYNE

What's in it for me?

FRED

Well, we won't know till we take a look.

WAYNE

What do ya mean?

FRED

If we find something, the university will keep the artifacts for research and education, and you'll be able to write it off as a donation on your taxes.

WAYNE

For stones?

FRED

That's right.

WAYNE

You boys got I.D's?

FRED

Of course we do, would you like to see them?

WAYNE

No, just checkin'. Is this a government sponsored program?

FRED AND CHRIS

No, sir!

WAYNE

You fellas doin' your survey all over the Guadelupe.

FRED

Yes, sir.

WAYNE

You been over to the Double C Ranch yet?

FRED

No yet. We're actually starting with you.

WAYNE

And why me?

CHRIS

If I may, Mr. Winger. Your ranch is strategically located along both the Guadelupe River and its confluence with Clear Creek. Such a watershed advantage coupled with the fact that your ranch lies on this side of the river which is predominantly outside of the hundred year flood plain makes it a highly strategic location for both hunting and dwelling.

WAYNE

Sure does. You been lookin at maps haven't ya?

CHRIS

Yes sir.

WAYNE

You been lookin' at any of them satellite maps?

CHRIS

Yes sir.

WAYNE

You seen any of them big holes?

CHRIS

Not that I recall, Mr. Winger.

WAYNE

But you could see a cow couldn't you?

CHRIS

What do you think, Fred?

FRED

Ya, I think you could see a cow.

WAYNE

I wouldn't mind takin' a look at one of them satellite maps to see if I can't see where these damn armadillos are coming from.

FRED

Oh, I don't think you could see an armadillo with the satellite.

WAYNE

You have no idea what kind of dillos I'm dealing with here. Really big ones, been digging holes down there already.

FRED

Well we'd be glad to help you look for them one day.

WAYNE

That's what I'm talkin' about, a real deal.

CHRIS

We'd be more than happy to show you our best satellite images, Mr. Winger.

WAYNE

Well that'd be just great, boys. I'm ready to catch these bastards. Why don't y'all go on and go ahead down there and have you a look at them holes and whatever else it is y'all are lookin for. There's a trail on the other side of the barn there that'll lead you down to the river. If you see Pancho when you get down there, tell him to get his ass back up here, tell him we ain't on Mexico time.

(Fred and Chris look at eachother.)

CHRIS

Who's Pancho?

WAYNE

He's a Mexican.

CHRIS

He works for you?

WAYNE

That's what Mexicans do ain't it?

(Pause.)

FRED

Thanks Mr. Winger, we'll see you in a bit.

WAYNE

Alright boys. See you in a few.

(Chris and Fred begin walking away.)

WAYNE

And keep an eye out for them dillos!

FRED

Will do, Mr. Winger. Thanks.

(Wayne watches as Chris and Fred exit and then he exits as well. Drums rise. Quichimin comes out of the mound, using his knife to mark his body with mud. As Chris and Fred approach the mound, Quichimin disappears, drums fade out.)

CHRIS

That Wayne is a real asshole if I've ever seen one.

FRED

One of the good ole boys still playin' Cowboys and Mexicans.

CHRIS

Hunting armadillos.

FRED

Working his wets. Hard to believe these guys still exist.

CHRIS

Are you kidding? You haven't been out of San Antone much lately have you?

FRED

All I'm sayin is that this guy seems like a complete moron.
I'm surprised he manages to keep the ranch alive.

CHRIS

Alive? Didn't you notice he doesn't even have any cattle or horses, no goats, not even a chicken. He doesn't even have a dog.

(Fred and Chris arrive in front of the hole.)

FRED

But he's got giant armadillos doesn't he? So, this is it.

CHRIS

This is it.

(Chris gets in the hole.)

I was right in here when the storm blew in, and I was just thinking about giving up when 'clang.'

FRED

You find any good points?

CHRIS

Yeah but nothing exceptional. It's one of the strangest mounds I've ever dug though.

FRED

What do you mean?

CHRIS

Well, when I first started digging, I was mainly finding Perdiz points, which made sense, since I was digging a shallow hole. But then I started finding older stuff: Castroville, Perdnale, Travis', Montels, all mixed up together. Now I've heard of mounds being mixed up like that, but I'd never seen it.

FRED

It's rare.

(Fred gets in the hole and starts poking around.)

CHRIS

And then the last time I came, I mean before I found the helmet, I found a pretty nice Nolan. And it just felt funny, you know, like this hole was going back into time or something. An entire history of the people of this land... all in one hole. And that's why I had to come back to keep digging it. I was hoping to find a Clovis or a Folsom... I've found broken ones before but never a perfect. And I could have sworn that's what I was going to find, and then 'clang,' comb morion.

FRED

This is gonna make one hell of a thesis.

CHRIS

Oh yeah?

FRED

Texas hasn't had a find like this since they discovered *La Belle* in Matagorda Bay.

CHRIS

The French ship?

FRED

La Salle's. Poor bastard. After that ship sank, he tried marching his men to Quebec, they eventually shot him.

CHRIS

The price of fortune.

FRED

You got it.

(Pause)

CHRIS

Who knows what could be left in this mound, Fred?

FRED

I know, you may have only just cracked the surface. This mound could change our whole notion of what was going on here.

CHRIS

Exactly.

(Fred is scratching around in the hole and Chris hops out.)

CHRIS

That's exactly what I'm talking about. This could change everything. We still don't know anything about the people who used to live here.

(Chris sees a shirt on the ground.)

CHRIS

What the hell...

FRED

What is it?

(Quichimin emerges from his hiding spot, but is still unseen to Chris and Fred.)

CHRIS

Somebody else has been down here.

(Quichimin slips between Fred and Chris, blocking Fred's ability to move.)

QUICHIMIN

Damelo.

FRED

Holy Shit!

CHRIS

What the hell!?

QUICHIMIN

El casco, por favor

CHRIS
What?

QUICHIMIN
Traeme el casco.

FRED
He wants the helmet.

CHRIS
How the hell does he know about the helmet?

QUICHIMIN
Traeme el casco aqui.

CHRIS
Espere un momento, señor.

FRED
His name is Pancho.

CHRIS
Espere un momento, Pancho.

QUICHIMIN
No me llamo Pancho. Me llamo Quichimin. Traeme el casco inmediatamente.

CHRIS
What's Quichimin?

FRED
It's not Spanish.

CHRIS
I know.

QUICHIMIN
Que estas esperando? Traeme el casco o hablan con El Ranchero.

CHRIS
Fuck.

FRED
No, no, no. No rancher, no ranchero.
(Pancho grabs a hold of Fred and holds the Clovis knife close to him.)

QUICHIMIN
Espero con El Professor.

CHRIS
Esta bien, Quichimin. Voy a traerlo.

QUICHIMIN

Andale, pues!

CHRIS

I'll be back as soon as I can, Fred.

FRED

Keep Wayne out of this.

CHRIS

I'll try.

FRED

Hurry up.

CHRIS

I'm gone.

(Chris exits. Quichimin holds Fred tighter who struggles slightly.)

QUICHIMIN

Shhh.

(Lights fade down on the hole, drums rise. Lights rise on to Wayne's porch. Chris walks in front and Wayne comes out.)

WAYNE

Hey, fella, you see any of them armadillos?

CHRIS

No, sir.

WAYNE

But you seen them holes, right?

CHRIS

Yes, sir.

WAYNE

Big, ain't they?

CHRIS

Sure are. Mr. Winger I've got to get...

WAYNE

You see my Mexican?

CHRIS

You mean Pancho?

WAYNE

That's what I said.

CHRIS

Yeah I saw him.

WAYNE

Was he fillin them holes in like I told him to?

CHRIS

Sure was. He had his work cut out for him too. You got lots of holes down there.

WAYNE

You're tellin me.

CHRIS

Yes sir, well I actually need to get...

WAYNE

Well where was it you were goin?

CHRIS

We forgot some gear at the office. I got to run back and get it.

WAYNE

What kind of gear?

CHRIS

Computer stuff, it's complicated. Mapping systems, you know.

WAYNE

No idea.

CHRIS

Well, I better hurry along.

WAYNE

San Antone's an awful long drive, ain't it?

CHRIS

Yeah, but I got an extra back at my place. It's only twenty minutes away. Sorry, Wayne I gotta get going.

WAYNE

Well, I'll let you get on.

CHRIS

Thanks, Wayne.

WAYNE

Alright now.

(They exit.)

END SCENE

Scene 2.3 : CHRIS'S HOUSE

(Marta covers Wayne's rocker and spittoon and uncovers the table and chairs. Magdalena is standing in the room, staring blankly out to the audience, still in her white Mexican style wedding dress. Chris bursts in, obviously nervous. Magdalena appears sick.)

CHRIS

Hey baby.

(Silence)

CHRIS

I'm sorry, miel-ita, something real bad is going down...

MAGDALENA

Don't call me 'honey'!

CHRIS

Jesus Christ, I'm sorry.

MAGDALENA

We need to talk.

CHRIS

I can't talk now, Maggie, I gotta...

MAGDALENA

You gotta what?

CHRIS

I gotta get the helmet.

MAGDALENA

What happened with Fred?

(Chris crosses into the bedroom.)

CHRIS

I'll have to explain it to you later. They're waitin' on me.

MAGDALENA

Who's waiting on you?

CHRIS

Fred, Pancho.

MAGDALENA

Pancho?

CHRIS

Pancho, Quichimin, I don't know.

MAGDALENA

Quichimin?

CHRIS

Quichimin.

MAGDALENA

What's Quichimin?

CHRIS

Quichimin...Quichimin is Pancho, I don't know, I...

MAGDALENA

Can you slow down a minute?

CHRIS

Where's the helmet, Maggie?

MAGDALENA

What do you the need the helmet for?

CHRIS

I need the helmet to get Fred out of the fuck hole. Where is it? It's not where I left it.

MAGDALENA

I buried it.

CHRIS

What? Where did you bury it, Maggie?

MAGDALENA

I hate that helmet, Chris. I hate it and it was making me feel sick.

CHRIS

Come on, Maggie. Quit fooling around. Where is it?

MAGDALENA

Outside.

CHRIS

Where is it at Maggie?!

MAGDALENA

Let's talk first.

CHRIS

Fred is in the fuck hole Maggie and you want to talk?

MAGDALENA

Fine, let's talk about the fuck hole. What the hell is happening at the fuck hole?

CHRIS

What's going on...? I don't know what's going on. This guy Pancho appeared out of nowhere and says 'bring me the helmet.' He's got Fred.

MAGDALENA

How does Pancho know about the helmet?

CHRIS

I don't know, but he does, maybe he overheard us talking about it when we walked up... I don't know. And he...

(Chris sees the point.)

CHRIS

Where'd this come from?

MAGDALENA

Shane. He stopped by to give it back to you.

CHRIS

Where's the helmet at Maggie?

MAGDALENA

He said it didn't feel right.

CHRIS

Look, Maggie, can you please just tell me where the god damn comb morion is?!

MAGDALENA

Don't yell at me. I don't feel well.

CHRIS

I'm sorry, Maggie, but I'm pissed. I'm losing everything here.

(Magdalena's spirit begins to fade.)

MAGDALENA

I know.

CHRIS

Magdalena...

MAGDALENA

Do you think I look pretty in my wedding dress?

CHRIS

Maggie...

MAGDALENA

Do you?

CHRIS

You're beautiful.

MAGDALENA

Even with my big round belly?

CHRIS

Of course.

MAGDALENA

Even with my swollen breasts?

CHRIS

Maggie... somebody's about to die if I don't get back with that helmet.

MAGDALENA

Somebody's about to be born.

CHRIS

Damn it, Maggie, I really don't have time for this right now.

MAGDALENA

Time.

CHRIS

Please, Magdalena.

MAGDALENA

It's in the bathroom.

CHRIS

Well, shit Maggie...

(Chris enters bedroom.)

MAGDALENA

Do I really look like someone that wants to be digging holes?

CHRIS

(offstage) Where is it?

MAGDALENA

In the bathtub.

(A long silence. Magdalena rests frozen on the stage. Finally...)

MAGDALENA

Chris...

(Chris enters, he carries a backpack charged with the helmet and a pistol. He walks slowly across the stage, eyes transfixed on the gun.)

MAGDALENA

Have you lost your mind?

CHRIS

No. No I haven't lost my mind, Magdalena.

MAGDALENA

Chris. Chris, look at me.

CHRIS

Don't worry, Maggie. It's just for protection.

MAGDALENA

Since when did you need a gun to protect yourself?

CHRIS

Fred's life is on the line, Maggie. There's nothing left to do.

(Chris puts the gun into the bag.)

CHRIS

Sorry this is all so crazy, Maggie. I'll be home as soon as I can.

MAGDALENA

Ve con dios.

*(Chris tries to kiss her. She turns away. Chris exits.
Magdalena stands, lost.)*

END SCENE

SCENE 2.4 : AT THE MOUND

(Quichimin maintains his hold on Fred. Wayne approaches the mound.)

WAYNE

Pancho! Pancho! Come on now!

(Wayne sees Pancho and Fred.)

WAYNE

What the hell...

(Chris enters. Through out the scene he gradually loses his composure.)

WAYNE

Hold it there young man.

FRED

Good god, what took you so long?

QUICHIMIN

Donde esta el casco?

WAYNE

What the hell are you saying? What the hell is he saying?

CHRIS

I don't know. I don't speak Spanish. I just went to get the equipment.

FRED

Chris.

QUICHIMIN

Donde esta el casco?

FRED

Give it to him.

WAYNE

Give him what?

QUICHIMIN

El casco!

WAYNE

What the hell is el...

FRED

The helmet. Chris, would you please give Pancho the helmet?

WAYNE
What helmet?

CHRIS
What helmet, Fred?

WAYNE
What the hell is going on here?

FRED
Give him the helmet, Chris.

QUICHIMIN
Damelo.

CHRIS
No lo tengo. No tengo el casco, huey.

WAYNE
You do speak Spanish don't you? Don't you?

CHRIS
Yes. I speak spaninsh.

WAYNE
Translate. Now tell Pancho here...

QUICHIMIN
Quichimin!

WAYNE
What?

CHRIS
He says his name is Quichimin.

WAYNE
His name is Pancho.

QUICHIMIN
Mi nombre es Quichimin!

WAYNE
What did he say?

CHRIS
He said his name is Quichimin, and then he called you...a very mean old man.

FRED
Whoa there, Wayne. Stay calm.

WAYNE

Tell him he ain't Quichimin, tell him he's Pancho. And tell him that he ain't gonna get paid today. And that if he don't get his ass off my property right away, I'm gonna shoot him in the face.

CHRIS

I don't...

WAYNE

Tell him!

CHRIS

Pancho...

QUICHIMIN

Silencio! Mi nombre ya no es Pancho. Mi nombre nunca fue Pancho. Este nombre es un nombre, que tu me pusiste. Mi nombre siempre fue Quichimin. Me entiendes? Dame el casco!

WAYNE

What was that?

CHRIS

He says his name is no longer Pancho. That it was never Pancho. That it's your name that you put on him, and that his name has always been Quichimin.

QUICHIMIN

El casco!

WAYNE

Son of a bitch.

FRED

C'mon, Chris, give it to him.

WAYNE

Give what to him?

FRED

Chris, please.

WAYNE

What the hell is going on?

QUICHIMIN

Ahorita!

WAYNE

Somebody better tell me something or I'm gonna shoot somebody!

(Chris hesitates. He reaches into his backpack. Again, hesitation. He pulls out the helmet.)

WAYNE

What the hell is that?

QUICHIMIN

Damelo.

WAYNE

Just what the hell is going on here?

FRED

Give him the helmet, Chris.

CHRIS

God damn it, Fred!

FRED

Chris, give it to him!

WAYNE

Don't give him nothing. What the hell is that?

QUICHIMIN

Damelo ya!

CHRIS

Ok, ok. Aqui lo tienes.

(Chris hands him the helmet. Quichimin lets loose of Fred, Fred crawls up and out of the hole. Quichimin is standing in the hole, holding the helmet, crying.)

WAYNE

You boys better get the hell off my property.

(Quichimin puts the helmet in the hole, and gets a shovel and starts to bury it rapidly.)

WAYNE

Ya hear! Get! Get gone and don't look back. Get on!

CHRIS

Wayne...

WAYNE

I ain't kidding sonny. Everything was fine around here till you university boys started pokin' around like a bunch of god damn armadillos, and now everything's gone to hell.

FRED

Sir, we...

WAYNE

Don't 'sir' me. Get the hell off my god damn land.

CHRIS

What about...

WAYNE

Don't you worry. This is my land and what happens on my land concerns me and me alone. You boys need persuadin? Get!

(Chris and Fred exit. Lights shift. A light sound of the drums is heard rising. Quichimin continues to bury the helmet.)

WAYNE

Get your ass out of that dirt boy! You hear me? Get your ass out of the dirt! That's my dirt you dirty son of a bitch. Get your ass out of my dirt. Pancho! Get your ass out of my dirt. Get on out!

(Quichimin sets down the shovel and looks at Wayne.)

QUICHIMIN

Este tierra, no es tu tierra.

(Wayne begins slowly shaking and fires his rifle. They freeze. Fred enter in front of Wayne's house.)

CHRIS

What the hell just happened?

FRED

I was gonna ask you the same thing. What was all that fucking around for?

CHRIS

I'm sorry, Fred. I got nervous. How did he know?

FRED

About the helmet?

CHRIS

Yeah.

FRED

God only knows.

CHRIS

We lost it.

FRED

Let's hope that's not all we lost.

(Marta appears.)

CHRIS

What are you talking about?

FRED

If Wayne talks to the cops, and they put the pieces together, my career will be over, and you can already forget about your degree.

CHRIS

Maybe I can come back.

FRED

Are you crazy?

CHRIS

Yes, yes I am. I've been digging out here for too long, and I've been dreaming about this hole, Fred. And that Clovis is in there, too, you saw it. We can't give up on this, Fred, it's too big of a find. You said so yourself.

FRED

I did, but it's over now. I'm finished here. Let's get out of here before Wayne comes back.

CHRIS

C'mon Fred. Fred... we can't let this go.

FRED

It's already gone.

*(Shot fired and Quichimin falls. Chris and Fred 'jump'.
Wayne begins shoveling dirt on top of Quichimin.)*

CHRIS

What was that? You heard that, Fred?

FRED

No... and neither did you.

CHRIS

What do you mean...

FRED

You know what I mean. We weren't here, Chris. Now c'mon, Let's get back to Kendalia.

*(Chris and Fred exit. Blue light falls on Wayne, who is still
shoveling dirt.)*

END SCENE

Scene 2.5 : Magdalena's Kitchen

(Marta sits down in the rocking chair. Magdalena dials her mother's number. She waits. No answer. She dials again and there is still no answer. She slams the phone down. She slams the phone over and over until it's broken, until she is broken. Marta exits. There comes a knock on the door. Magdalena freezes. Silence. She scrambles to clean up the pieces of the broken phone. More knocking.)

MAGDALENA

Who is it?

CÉSAR

(Offstage)

César del Alba.

MAGDALENA

César! Un momentito!

(Magdalena goes to the door. CÉSAR is standing there, he walks in and they hug.)

CÉSAR

Como estas hermanita?

MAGDALENA

Muy bien. I'm big! Y tu?

CÉSAR

Bien.

MAGDALENA

What are you doing here? You're looking good.

CÉSAR

Thank you. What's wrong?

MAGDALENA

Your English sounds better.

CÉSAR

Magdalena, what's the matter?

(César moves across the stage.)

MAGDALENA

Oh, you know, I'm preganant. It makes you emotional. Hey, what's with the surprise? Were you heading to San Antonio?

CÉSAR

No. I'm heading to Laredo.

MAGDALENA

Are you going home?

CÉSAR

Si.

MAGDALENA

Is it Lucia's birthday already?

CÉSAR

No.

MAGDALENA

César... what's wrong? César, what's going on?

CÉSAR

Mama... Mama...

(He can't finish his sentence.)

MAGDALENA

Mama what? César? What's happened with Mama?

CÉSAR

Mama esta muerta. Mama esta muerta, Magdalena.

(Long silence. Marta exits.)

MAGDALENA

What happened, César? Why didn't anyone call me? Why didn't uncle Jaime call me?

CÉSAR

Mama no murio en Apaseo, Magdalena.

MAGDALENA

What?

CÉSAR

She didn't die in Apaseo. She died in Nuevo Laredo.

MAGDALENA

Nuevo Laredo? Que estaba haciendo...

CÉSAR

She was coming to see you.

(Magdalena has to sit down.)

CÉSAR

She was going to surprise you. She called me to borrow the money to get across... things

CÉSAR (CONTINUED)

have been good for me so I wanted to help her. And you're my sister, you deserve your mother to be here for your baby. She was supposed to be on the bus to San Antonio right now.

MAGDALENA

What happened?

CÉSAR

I don't want to tell you.

MAGDALENA

Tell me!

CÉSAR

No te quiero decir. No te puedo decir. No lo quiero ni pensar. Me parte el alma... por favor...

(Magdalena stands up.)

MAGDALENA

You tell me now, César. Ya eres un hombre. Tell me. Que le paso a mama?

CÉSAR

She was murdered.

MAGDALENA

No.

CÉSAR

Si.

MAGDALENA

By who?

CÉSAR

By who? Quien mas? Bastardos! Rateros!

MAGDALENA

Coyotes?

CÉSAR

Si, coyotes....or one of their guys. That's what the police told me on the phone... you know that it happens every day. People come with cash to get smuggled over, and they get caught by somebody before they can make it to the coyote. Or the coyote just takes their money and disappears. It could have been just some random thief.

MAGDALENA

How did she die?

CÉSAR

Knifed. Left in the street.

(Silence)

CÉSAR

They found my number in her things that weren't stolen and called me. Los pinches cabrones. They told me that I have to get her body within 24 hours or they're going to bury her in the common place. I'm going to take her home to Apaseo. Where's Chris?

(Silence)

CÉSAR

Where's Chris, Magdalena?

MAGDALENA

He's gone.

CÉSAR

Gone? What do you mean gone? Tell me where he is.

MAGDALENA

I don't know. He's gone. He's lost. He's trying to find something that he can't have. He's trying to hold on to the wind.

CÉSAR

Magdalena, you aren't making sense. Where is Chris?

MAGDALENA

He's in a hole.

CÉSAR

A hole?

MAGDALENA

He's in a hole, César. He's digging a hole and he's digging so deep that he's lost himself.

CÉSAR

What the hell are you talking about, Magdalena?

MAGDALENA

He's leaves me alone almost every night. He goes off by himself after dark. He doesn't come back until the early morning. He walks up the river and he goes to his dig, to the old Indian camps. He digs and digs looking for things.

CÉSAR

Flechas?

MAGDALENA

Arrowheads, spear points, knives, scrapers, buffalo bones, deer bones, drills... metates... anything he can find. But he can never find enough. He never finds what he's looking for. But last night he found something he never thought he'd find, a helmet, a helmet of a Spaniard, a con-qui-sta-dor! It's taken him over.

CÉSAR

Jesus. So he's back there now?

MAGDALENA

Yes.

CÉSAR

Why?

MAGDALENA

I can't tell you why. But something bad is happening. Do you remember how mama used to tell us stories about espirtus malignos?

CÉSAR

Yes.

MAGDALENA

Well, I don't know what else to say, César. Some kind of espirtu maligno is working here. I need to leave, César. I need to get my baby out of this house. I'm going with you.

CÉSAR

You're too pregnant, Magdalena. It's a long way home, and I'm going to have to deal with the bastards in Laredo.

MAGDALENA

I don't care. Hermano, take me with you. I'm through with America. I fell in love with America and America has broken my heart.

CÉSAR

Think about your baby, Magdalena. If you go back to Mexico now, your baby will be a Mexican. Just wait, please. Let your baby be born first, and then I'll get you home, I promise you Magdalena, I'll take you back to Apaseo. Magdalena, women risk their lives everyday and cross that border just to have their babies born in America, so that they'll be Americans.

MAGDALENA

You don't think that I don't think about the baby? This child is my life. Every moment of every day all I can think about is this baby inside of me. I don't care where she's from. She comes from me, not from America, not from Mexico. She comes from the earth, César. I only care about her spirit, that she has a good heart... that's what makes a human being, not the passport. America... it's a broken dream, César. I can feel things changing. By the time my little girl is a woman, Americans will be crossing the Rio Grande to come to Mexico.

CÉSAR

So you think it's a girl?

MAGDALENA

I know so. I see her in my dreams. She talks to me.

CÉSAR

I can't wait to meet her.

(Silence)

CÉSAR

What about Chris?

MAGDALENA

He left us. He can come and find us.

CÉSAR

But he's the father.

MAGDALENA

What's a father?

CÉSAR

A father is...

MAGDALENA

Where are your children, César?

(Silence)

MAGDALENA

César, donde estan tu ninos? En Mexico, César. En Apaseo. That's where they are.

CÉSAR

Mexico.

MAGDALENA

Are you ready?

CÉSAR

What do you need?

MAGDALENA

Time to write Chris a note, and get a few things. I'll only be a second.

CÉSAR

Do you need a hand?

MAGDALENA

No, it's not much.

CÉSAR

Okay. I'll wait in the truck. I need to call uncle Jaime and let him know we're coming.

MAGDALENA

Thank you, César.

(Magdalena heads to the bedroom.)

Hermana. CÉSAR

Si? MAGDALENA

Te amo. CÉSAR

I'll be right out. MAGDALENA

(César exits and Magdalena goes into the bedroom.)

END SCENE

Scene 2.6 : Chris's House

(Marta enters and sets the children's book on the table, she slips Magdalena's note into 'The Mouse and the Armadillo', then lingers. Chris enters the house. He is physically, emotionally, and mentally exhausted, and he is slightly drunk. He walks over to the table and sits down. It takes him a few moments to realize that the house is silent. He looks around.)

CHRIS

Magdalena... Magdalena? I'm home, miel-ita. Maggie? I'm sorry, baby, come on out of there and talk to me, please. I lost it. I lost the god damn comb morion. It's back to beans and rice, baby. Magdalena! Can you forgive me for once? Are you hearing this, Maggie? Are you even hearing a god damn word of what I'm saying here? I'm trying to open up here, god damn it. Well?! Magdalena!?

(Chris sees the books on the table.)

Did you like the books I brought you? Magdalena? Did you find your fairy tale ending?!

(Chris grabs 'The Little Mouse and the Armadillo'. He sees the note and reads it. Silence. He slowly sits down at the table. He begins thumbing through the pages of The Little Mouse and the Armadillo. Chris remains.)

END SCENE

Scene 2.8 : WAYNE'S PORCH

(Wayne enters with the helmet. He sits down and replaces the spittoon. EMILIANO arrives with his arms full of fire wood. He stops in front of Wayne. Wayne spits into the helmet and hands Emiliano the spittoon. Chris slowly turns the pages of 'The Little Mouse and the Armadillo'.)

WAYNE

Now, take it inside and stack it by the stove.

EMILIANO

Si, señor Wayne.

WAYNE

Call me jefe.

EMILIANO

Que?

WAYNE

Call me jefe.

EMILIANO

Si, jefe.

(Emiliano exits. Wayne sings. Emiliano returns.)

WAYNE

Good work there, Pancho. Let's see... you fed the chickens?

EMILIANO

Perdon, jefe, me llamo Emiliano. My name is Emiliano.

WAYNE

It's Pancho to me.

EMILIANO

Como quiera.

WAYNE

Did you feed the chickens?

EMILIANO

Si.

WAYNE

You fed the goats?

EMILIANO

Si.

WAYNE

You fed the mule?

EMILIANO

Si.

WAYNE

You stripped those cedar posts?

EMILIANO

Si.

WAYNE

Good. How about the fence, did you mend that fence already.

EMILIANO

Si.

WAYNE

And you cut up all the fire wood?

EMILIANO

Si.

(A hawk cries and Emiliano points to the sky.)

EMILIANO

Mire.

(Wayne raises his rifle and they both freeze. Chris sinks into the story. Marta enters and begins to sprinkle Chris with earth as she sings. The lights take a long fade to black.)

MARTA

Duérmete mi niño.
Duérmete mi sol.
Duérmete pedazo,
De mi corazón.

THE END

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

The creation and evolution of *The Digger* has given me an excellent opportunity to experience the various environments from which a play might grow. Starting with the play's conception that led to the staged reading, and then from the full production and the meditations that followed, *The Digger* has undergone an intense dramaturgical process that has helped me as a playwright and hopefully the text itself. It is a play that speaks to many contemporary issues and to others that are timeless. As we continue to struggle with the politics and policies of our southern border, I hope that *The Digger* finds its way into the repertoires of bilingual theatres across the nation.

Before entering the graduate theatre department at Texas State I worked for a non-profit watershed conservation in my home town of Wimberley. The executive director invited me to drive with him to a small town outside Laredo where he was going to be delivering spring water from Jacob's Well, a beautiful artesian spring located in Wimberley, to the Native American Church for use in one of their water ceremonies. On this trip I met a man named Gary Perez. A year and a half later I invited Gary to come help two of our actors learn the principles of drumming, as the play calls for drums to rise up and around the midden. Gary was pleased to help and he later brought his entire family and some friends to the opening night of the show. After the show Gary said to

me, “You must really have a connection to this land. It’s like the land asked you to tell this story.” I smiled and said to him, “It did.”

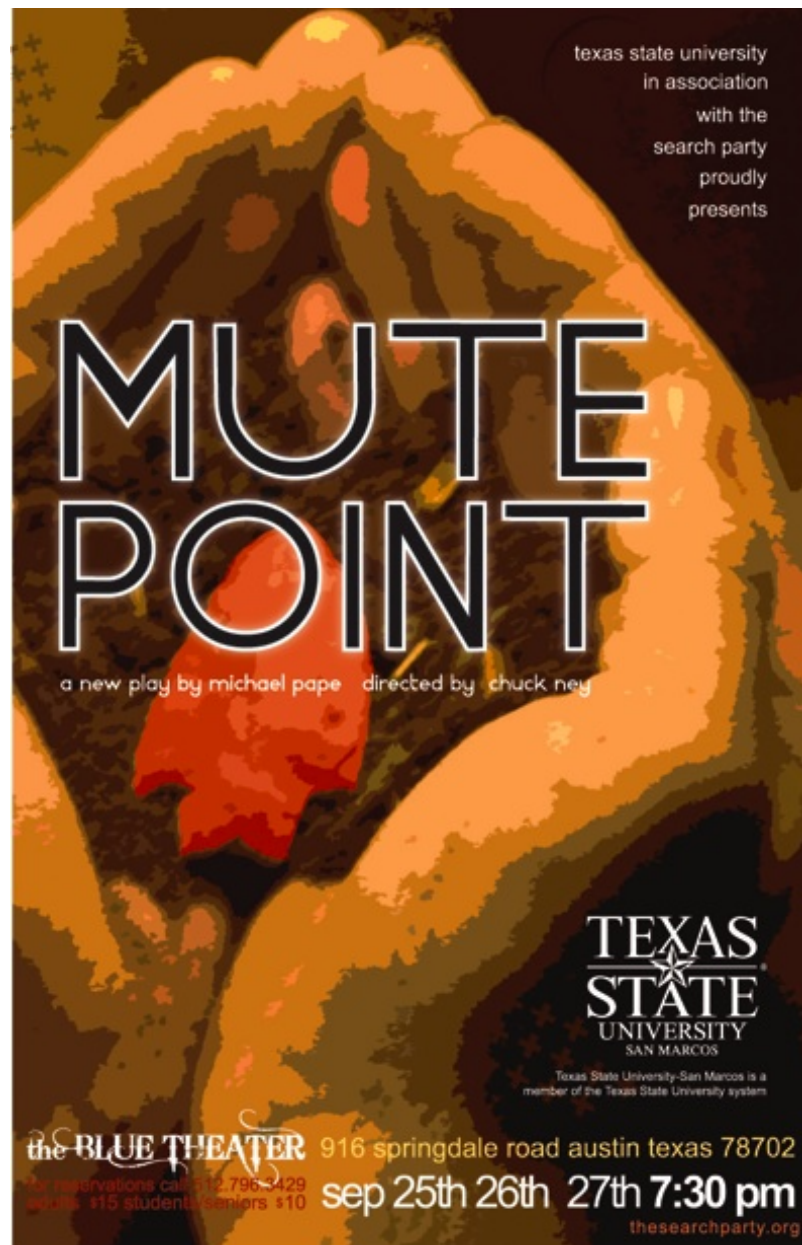
APPENDIX A

PROGRAM NOTE

The Texas Hill Country is one of the longest continually habited places in North America. This means that since the first human beings stopped here as they moved across the continent, there have always been human beings living in the Hill Country. The springs that feed the San Marcos River in particular seem to be where people loved to live the most. Yet they lived all over the Hill Country, along the Guadalupe, Nueces, Pedernales and Blanco Rivers. The Rivers were then, as they are today, the life blood of this land. The last free native people to call this place home were the Tonkawa, which to them meant 'Real People'. Despite helping the European settlers in their fight against the Apache and Comanche, the Tonkawa were forced to leave their ancestral lands and were marched on foot to the plains of Oklahoma. All that remains of the Tonkawa in Texas, and all that remains of the many nations that called the Hill Country home, is their kitchens, or middens, that are sleeping beside the rivers, buried by floods, by homes, by time. There are also lost tribes who linger here today, who live in the shadows of modern culture, like the Mission Indians of San Antonio, the descendants of those first residents from places like the Alamo.

APPENDIX B

POSTER



APPENDIX C

PRODUCTION COMPANY

CAST

Marta	Juliana Vera
Wayne	Judd Farris
Quichimin	Daniel Cardoza
Chris	Jack DiBlisi
Shane	Mike Holley
Magdalena	Annette Flores
Fred	Michael Amendola
César	Benito Lara
Emiliano	Johnny Colombo
Director	Chuck Ney

PRODUCTION STAFF

Associate Director	Woody Wood
Scene Design	Vanessa Velasquez
Costume Design	Rachel Brown
Lighting Design	Chris McKnight
Stage Manager	Caleb Straus
Assistant Stage Manager	Christine Tankersley
Playwright Advisor	John Fleming
Co-Producers	John Fleming, Jeremy Torres
Technical Director	Joe Pauli
Scenic Artists	Andrea Ball, Brittany Baugh, Kelsey Boutte
Properties	Vanessa Velasquez
Light Board Operator	Douglas Ferguson
Master Electricians	David Gibson, Jan Allen Bowley
Electricians	David Gibson, Jan Allen Bowley,Mariah Borden, Nicci Williams, Douglas Ferguson,Stephen Bassinger, Joe Martin, Shelly Long
Set Design Faculty Supervisor	Michelle Ney
Technical Direction Faculty Supervisor	Shane K. Smith

APPENDIX D

PRODUCTION PHOTOS



1.1 : Marta uncovering Wayne's chair.



1.2 : Wayne: *"You can't eat a hawk, stupid. It ain't a chicken."*



1.5 : Chris and Shane at the dig.



1.6 : Chris shows Magdalena the helmet.



1.7 : Fred: *"You know whose ranch you were digging on?"*



1.9 : Magdalena reads *The Little Mouse and the Armadillo*.



1.10 : Quichimin holding the feather and the point.



2.4 : Chris : “We can’t let this go, Fred.”



2.5 : César: *"Mama esta muerta, Magdalena."*



2.5 : César : *"She didn't die in Apaseo. She died in Nuevo Laredo."*



2.7 : Wayne : *"It's Pancho to me."*



2.8 : Marta: “*Duermete mi nino.*”



2.9 : Gary Perez (far left) working on drumming with (from left to right) Benito Lara (*César*), Johnny Colombo (*Emiliano*) and Daniel Cardoza (*Quichimin*).

APPENDIX E

RESOURCE IMAGE



Prehistoric projectile point found in San Marcos, Texas.

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VITA

Michael Pape is currently completing an M.A. degree in playwriting at the Texas State University–San Marcos Graduate College of Theatre and Dance. While presently honing his playwriting skills, Michael is also an actor, director, and theatre scholar. He completed his B.A. in Theatre Studies from Reed College in Portland, Oregon, received certification from the European Academy of Physical Theatre in Paris, France, and has presented original scholarship at an international theatre festival in Latvia. Upon completion of his M.A. degree, Michael intends to pursue a Ph.D. in order to reinforce his theoretical and practical knowledge of the theatre.

This thesis was typed by Michael C. Pape.